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In the last issue it should have been made clear that Chief Constable John Alderson was interviewed by Martin Kettle.

## THE TIMES

An uneasy peace reigns once again at *The Times*. But as the redundancy volunteers collect their cheques, those who stayed behind to continue working for Mr Rupert Murdoch are counting the very different cost of Fleet Street's latest — and most successful — dawn raid on trade union organisation.

The February crisis at Times Newspapers was precipitated by the proprietor's ultimatum to close all six titles unless the union chapels accepted several hundred redundancies. It was reported almost entirely in the orthodox business-cum-cultural context of 'Will *The Times* close?'. The media gave little serious attention to the impact of the 'dispute' on labour relations generally.

The last inverted commas are appropriate because there were no production problems at the Grays Inn Road plant. Indeed, there has been minimal disruption since the Murdoch takeover in February 1981. Any threat of industrial action immediately drew a pre-emptive strike from management. In the case of the *Sunday Times* NGA machine managers last autumn, it took the form of dismissal and the suspension of all other staff without pay — an act described by the supposedly-libertarian *Times* editor Harold Evans as 'immoral, illegal, necessary and right.'

That was the backdrop to the manufactured confrontation that was widely expected within the building as 1982 began. Murdoch's style has been to fly in, summon the print union general secretaries for a hectoring about manning levels and the huge drain on the parent company News International (bankrolled by *The Sun* and *News of the World*) and jet out again.

Figures of £15 million losses were banded

around but never explained in detail. The papers were 'bleeding to death' while actual earnings at more than £100 million a year were at an all-time high, despite a deliberate policy of depressing the cover price to win readers from the *Guardian*, *Daily Telegraph* and even more down-market titles. In the original sales prospectus prepared by previous owner Lord Thomson, the price should have risen from 20p to 25p in April 1981, and to 30p this spring.

By maximising the intimidatory effect of the cash flow problems (which were at least partly due to the week-long close down last autumn, and management's own action in dismissing many marketing and advertising staff), the company induced a feverish sense of crisis in which the unions felt compelled to be seen to be making some concessions both for the public good and in the interests of the majority of their members.

It was a smart move, and to a degree it paid off. Murdoch had learned the lesson of the abortive Thomson lock-out of 1978-79: don't attack hard on all fronts simultaneously. Little was asked of some tough chapels. The company went for the Natsopa chapel that was at once the soft under-belly of the workforce and the symbol of militant shopfloor leadership — the clerical staff, led by Barry Fitzpatrick, a regular Left contender for national office in the print union. No less than 490 of the proposed 600 full-time job losses were demanded from his people.

Fitzpatrick was an important target. His only serious political rival, Reg Brady, one-time scourge of the Thomson owners as father of the *Sunday Times* Natsopa machine chapel, had earlier been appointed by Murdoch as a £25,000 a year industrial relations executive, in the classic Fleet Street tradition of 'if you can't beat them, hire them'.

Every stroke in the book (and some that

are not) was pulled. When the clerical workers proved unexpectedly obstinate, TNL sought to by-pass the chapel; firstly, by reaching an understanding with the national leadership that redundancy volunteers would not lose their union card (and with it their livelihood in the industry); and then by approaching staff directly at their homes with an invitation to accept tempting lump sums by applying direct to a Post Office box number. There was even a threat that the chapel would be run directly from Natsopa head office.

Under that kind of pressure, the chapel gave way and negotiated redundancies, though the company got less than half it asked for. There were compromises in other areas, too. Harry Evans was eased out with a golden handshake said to be worth £263,000, and his assistant editor, Dr Bernard Donohue, one-time head of premier Callaghan's think tank at Downing Street, was summarily dismissed. Top management was rearranged but if anything Murdoch tightened his grip.

In retrospect, the latest Battle of New Printing House Square revealed some ominous gaps in trade union organisation. Murdoch resuscitated the old tactic of divide and rule, and played one group off against another. The shopfloor TNL All-Union Liaison Committee, which functioned fitfully but adequately during the big lockout, was never mobilised to provide a common front against the policy of job cuts. In the case of Natsopa particularly, there was a divided response between national and shopfloor leadership.

The so-called 'national' directors appointed to the senior Times Newspapers (Holdings) Ltd board — their Lordships Dacre, Roll, Greene and Robens and Sir Edward Pickering — did, however, finally reassert their paper authority. Their intervention, plus the publicity occasioned by persistent NUJ questioning, got the papers' titles restored to TNL from the parent company News International, where Murdoch had salted them away — presumably to secure them to himself if he liquidated Times Newspapers. Any liquidation was the key threat in the whole paraphernalia of management by ultimatum.

Having stripped the company of its most tangible asset — the six-storey office block at 200 Grays Inn Road — Murdoch was in a position to close down TNL and with the titles under his belt, try a restart later on his own terms. That option is not now so readily available.

Looking ahead, it seems that Murdoch will continue his job-cutting programme



that has sliced employment at Times Newspapers from 3,500 at the time of the takeover to around 2,000. Accelerated development of the new computerised photocomposition system will do away with copy holders and readers shortly, and the company is then poised to go for the biggest prize of all — direct input into the computer by journalists.

Talks have already begun with the NGA on the siting of three visual display units in the editorial area, and *The Times* seems set to be the first national newspaper where journalists get their hands on to live keyboards. It will be a modest start, but Bill O'Neill, Murdoch's Australian responsible for getting the system on full stream has made it clear that, 'This is the thin end of the wedge'.

The mood at New Printing House Square is one of relief mixed with apprehension. Relief that the horrors are over and apprehension that they will start again before long. Murdoch does not belong to the old-style Beaverbrook school of proprietors. He is more interested in profits than propaganda (though he doesn't see why he can't have both) and with alleged losses running at £4 million a year even after the last round of cuts, the temptation to cut and cut again must still be there.

Elsewhere in Fleet Street, there is understandable anxiety that other proprietors faced with recession-induced cash problems will seek to copy Murdoch's strategy. Economies are already being demanded at Express Newspapers with management blaming the impact of the Aslef strikes on circulation costs. The NPA has held down the annual wage rise for the industry to 5% and unemployment in the industry is higher than for many years. Chapel power as we have known it for the last two decades may not be on the run, but it is certainly on the defensive.

Jack Wakefield

## SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL PARTY

The recent defeat by a decisive majority of the Head Committee of the Transvaal National Party, of the *verkrampte* (right wing) challenge to the *verligte* (reformist) policy of Prime Minister Botha, marks a turning point in the balance of political power within the ruling party in South Africa. It has led directly to the formation of the new Conservative Party by Dr Andries Treurnicht and 15 other rebel National Party MPs at a rally of 10,000 people in

Pretoria. For, while the specific question on which the Head Committee voted was Botha's proposal, opposed by the Transvaal leader Treurnicht and the *verkrampte* faction, to make some changes in the political position of the coloured and Indian people, the whole reformist policy of the present government was at issue. The significance of the *verkrampte* defeat, in the most powerful and, hitherto, the most reactionary of the provincial parties, is that it reflects a new balance of power which, in turn, is related to changes in class formation and alliances within the party.

The NP has been conventionally seen as a monolithic organisation representing 'the Afrikaner' in South African politics. Such a static, undifferentiated, 'ethnic' view of the NP is profoundly misleading. The NP is, in fact, no single 'national' party, but rather a loose federation of four autonomous provincial parties, each with its own distinct social basis, party organisation, membership, leadership, press, constitution and political and ideological style. The 'regionalist' or 'provincialist' struggles which have always plagued Afrikaner nationalist politics rest, in a sense, on these four distinct party structures. More fundamentally, however, this regionalism and the, often wide, policy and ideological differences between the provincial political parties are bound up with the distinct class basis of each party; it is the institutionalisation of a specific form of class alliance which differentiates each of the provincial parties. The conflict between the provincial parties has been largely expressed in ideological terms as deep differences over the definition of the interests of the Afrikaner 'volk', and in policy disputes. Acute conflicts and struggles within Afrikaner

Botha



nationalist ranks has been a constant feature of South African politics since 1948 (and indeed before). The content and form of these struggles have shifted with changes in the social bases of the various provincial NPs.

In the Transvaal the party has organised the political alliance of the (almost exclusively Afrikaans-speaking) capitalist farmers of the Province, specific strata of white workers in the mines, construction, steel and transport industries, the large Afrikaans-speaking petty bourgeoisie in the state apparatuses and the professions; and finally, emerging out of this latter group, a small class of aspirant commercial and financial capitalists organised in the *Reddingsdaadbeweging* (literally, the movement for the act of rescue). It should be stressed however that alongside the NP, Transvaal Nationalist politics was dominated by a secret society known as the Afrikaner *Broederbond*. The Afrikaner *Broederbond* was effectively the institution through which the specific interests of the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie came to be independently organised and articulated. In both the wider Afrikaner nationalist movement in the Transvaal, and in the NP in particular, an ideology of the Afrikaner volk was articulated which stressed a particular form of anti-imperialism and the interests of the 'small man' against the large (and predominantly English-speaking) monopolies which dominated the economy.

In the Cape, by contrast, the NP had long rested on an economic and political alliance between the wealthier Afrikaner capitalist farmers, particularly of the Western Cape, on the one hand, and a small group of Afrikaner financial capitalists on the other. The Cape party was always far more openly capi-

Treurnicht



talist in orientation and sympathies than that of the Transvaal. Its interpretation of what constituted the Afrikaner volk and its interests likewise differed considerably, laying far greater emphasis on the conditions to secure stable capitalist profit. Most significantly, the Afrikaner Broederbond was not a particularly important force in Cape nationalist politics. By 1960 the process of capital accumulation was rapidly loosening the economic dependence between Cape Afrikaner finance capital and agriculture. This vital shift in the alignment of forces organised by the Cape NP, had significant effects for the politics of the Cape Party. The Cape Party began to engage in increasingly open conflict with the provincial parties on precisely the basic question of the constitution of the Afrikaner volk and the nature of its interests. In the period 1960-66, the Cape NP was regarded in nationalist circles as 'the opposition party'. This conflict raged in all the organisations of Afrikaner nationalism, from business groupings, the Broederbond (itself used as a counter force to the Cape Party), churches, to parliament and cabinet. The main differences were over labour policy, with the Cape group favouring much looser restrictions on the mobility and training of African labour. But this was in many

respects the fundamental question around which Afrikaner nationalism as a class alliance hinged — these issues touched directly the interests of all the various class forces organised under Afrikaner nationalism. Two opposing tendencies — *verligte* and *verkrampste* — emerged. The *verligte* were in fact advocating a new interpretation of the interests of the Afrikaner volk, one which concentrated particularly on the needs of the rapidly growing group of Afrikaner capitalists.

The *verkrampste/verligte* conflict was essentially a struggle between those who wished to preserve the class alliance of 1948, an alliance dominated by the interests of farmers and the petty bourgeoisie, against those who realised that the social base of Afrikaner nationalism had shifted profoundly, and wanted to transform the ideology and politics to suit the changing class composition of the volk. The *verligte* wing began to push for more general reformist policies particularly with respect to labour and state control of the economy. The Right was demanding a maintenance of tight influx control measures, restrictions on the employment of skilled African labour, no form of recognition for African trade unions and continued state control of the infrastruc-

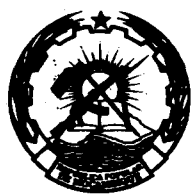
tural sectors of the economy. This right wing position still rested on an alliance of capitalist farmers, white workers and sections of the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie, particularly those employed by the state.

The vote in the Transvaal Head Committee signals a rupturing of this alliance, now formalised by the founding of the new Conservative Party, and a growing dominance, throughout the National Party, of the reformist tendency which was initiated in the Cape.

Harold Wolpe

### WHEN IS A TRESPASS NOT A TRESPASS?

Lord Kincaig's decision at Edinburgh's Court of Session on 26 February to withdraw an interim interdict (injunction) granted earlier that month restraining the occupation of Plessey's electronics components factory in Bathgate, West Lothian, not only raises an interesting legal question — namely when is a trespass not unlawful? — but also carries important implications for industrial practices on both sides of the border. James Gould, chairman of the CBI in Scotland, immediately pointed out that



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Tony Benn's talk on Marxism and Democracy  
was this year's annual lecture organised  
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denying Scottish employers recourse to the law in cases of factory occupations could set an example for the rest of Britain; local Labour MP Tom Dalyell jubilantly claimed that 'Boardrooms throughout the City of London will have to take cognisance of this decision'; while the *Morning Star* saw the judge's comments as 'of significance for the whole trade union movement'. What was all the fuss about?

Plessey's is a profitable British-based multinational company specialising in the booming electronics industry. Despite profits of £84 million in the first three quarters of 1981 and order books standing at £1,150 million, a decision was taken in January of this year to stop the manufacture of capacitors at the Bathgate plant, which uses some of the most advanced machinery in the world, and transfer production to Italy with the loss of 330 jobs. The proposed closure would continue the programme of 'rationalisation' — running down production in Britain and re-investing capital in more profitable locations — pursued by Plessey's throughout the 1970s, the workforce having been reduced in the UK from 68,000 to 38,000 over the past four years.

On 25 January, however, 200 workers at the plant voted to oppose the closure and begin sitting-in, following the famous Scottish examples of UCS and Plesseys (Alexandria) in the 70s and more recently the successful Lee Jeans occupation at Greenock. The company responded by applying for an interim interdict, claiming infringement of its property rights, which was granted by Lord Kincaid on 4 February. The unanimous vote to maintain the sit-in despite this ruling then brought another Order from the Court of Session requiring the 117 women and 10 men named in the original action to appear before the court and explain their non-compliance. So it was that on 26 February Lord Kincaid reversed his previous decision, recalling the interdict on the grounds that, since the occupation was 'in furtherance of a trade dispute' as laid down in Section 13 of the 1974 Trade Union and Labour Relations Act, and Parliament's intention in drafting this legislation had been to keep such matters out of the courts, the defendants might have legal immunity from the employers' action. He added: 'It may be that sit-ins have been legalised by that section. I would myself doubt it, but I cannot at this stage affirm that it does not.' Plessey's appeal against this ruling was postponed three times, pending the outcome of negotiations taking place through ACAS, where 80 jobs were in fact saved.

What is at stake here, however, is manage-



*Plessey workers meet during their occupation of the Bathgate factory*

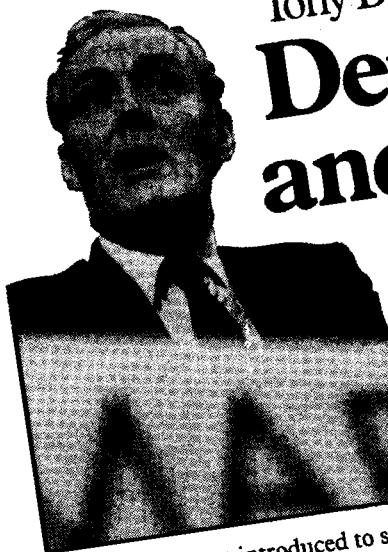
ment's ability to manage the production process, to direct labour and allocate other resources in accordance with its profit calculations, regardless of broader social issues or the particular needs of local communities. This ability ultimately depends, in Scottish and in English law, on the private property right of the enterprise to *exclude* labour from the point of production — workers having the status of mere licensees and thus becoming *trespassers* on exceeding the conditions of their licence or its withdrawal. Thus events at Plessey's might have been expected to take a course similar to that at the nearby Leyland truck plant, where Lord Mayfield's interim interdict of 30 January was quite unequivocal and a sit-in protesting at the loss of 1300 jobs was ended after a week, enabling BL to proceed with redeployment of plant and machinery; or to that at Laurence Scott's engineering works in Manchester, where a 17 week sit-in was ended in September 1981, after the defendants' refusal to obey a court order, by bailiffs wielding sledgehammers and pick axe handles. Employers have successfully resorted to trespass and related law throughout the 1970s to regain possession from protesting occupiers, as have other private property interests in removing squatters and student demonstrators, so why this apparent perverse decision in 1982, and what are its legal and social implications?

The law has been embarrassed in this case because of the inability of the court to reconcile two different areas of law brought clearly into conflict by the Bathgate occupation, involving on the one hand the enterprise's right of exclusive management and control, and on the other the workers' right, enshrined in public statute, of immunity

from private actions in tort where the industrial practice is 'in furtherance of a trade dispute'. This legal contradiction has always been likely to become manifest since the appearance of mass protests involving trespass at the beginning of the 1970s, and has emerged as such now in the context of a worsening economic situation which has forced more closures, redundancies and increasing unemployment and resulted in a greater determination of workers in certain areas to fight closure plans and defy the due process of law. Whereas previously the 'trade dispute', whether strike, work-to-rule or overtime ban, had left management's fundamental right of exclusion unaffected, the new forms of industrial protest take the struggle firmly onto the premises of the enterprise and involve a challenge to management's *ultimate* right to sack workers, cease production, withdraw investment and dispose of valuable plant and capital equipment. The suggestion that factory occupations might be 'lawful', despite the obvious trespass committed, is anathema to company managements constantly seeking further rationalisation. Well might the chairman of the Scottish CBI lament: 'It is a strange situation where the court denies a firm access to its own premises and goods.'

In March the appellate judges in the Scottish Court of Session confirmed Lord Kincaid's decision. It could be reversed at a later date, but meanwhile a glimpse has been caught of the contradictory operation of the law in a period of economic recession; and isolated victories may be expected to continue against closure decisions outside the courts through the sheer determination and defiance of the occupiers.

*Peter Vincent-Jones*



Tony Benn

# Democracy and Marxism

Marxism has only had a limited influence in the British Labour movement: but it will play a crucial role in its future.

Though I was not introduced to socialism through a study of Marx, and would not describe myself as a Marxist, I regard it as a privilege and an honour to have been invited to deliver this Lecture in memory of Karl Marx. The intellectual contribution made by Marx to the development of socialism was and remains absolutely unique.

But Marx was much more than a philosopher. His influence in moving people all over the world to social action ranks him with the founders of the world's greatest faiths. And, like the founders of other faiths, what Marx and others inspired has given millions of people hope, as well as the courage to face persecution and imprisonment.

Since 1917, when the Bolsheviks came to power in the Soviet Union, we have had a great deal of experience of national power structures created in the name of Marxism, and of the achievements and failures of those systems. Some of the sternest critics of Soviet society also based themselves upon Marx, including Leon Trotsky, Mao Tse-Tung, Tito and a range of libertarian Marxist dissidents in Eastern Europe and Eurocommunists in the West.

This Lecture is concerned with only two aspects of Marxism. First, the challenge which Marxism presents to liberal capitalist societies which have achieved a form of political democracy based upon universal adult suffrage: and second, the challenge to those societies, which have based themselves on Marxism by the demands for political democracy.

It is, I believe, through a study of this mutual challenge that we can get to the heart of many of the problems now confronting the communist and the non-communist countries, and illuminate the conflicts within and between different economic systems and between the developed and the developing world.

Before I begin, let me make my own convictions clear.

1 I believe that no mature tradition of political democracy today can survive if it does not open itself to the influence of Marx and Marxism.

2 I believe that communist societies cannot survive if they do not accept the demands of the people for democratic rights upon which a secure foundation of consent for socialism must ultimately rest.

3 I believe that world peace can be maintained only if the peoples of the world are discouraged from holding to the false notion that a holy war is necessary between Marxist and non-Marxists.

4 I believe that the moral values upon which social justice must rest, require us to accept that Marxism is now a world faith and must be allowed to enter into a continuing dialogue with other world faiths, including religious faiths.

5 I believe that socialism can only prosper if socialists can develop a framework for discussing the full richness of their own traditions

and be ready to study the now considerable history of their own successes and failures.

## The evolution of British democracy

If an understanding of socialism begins — as it must — with a scientific study of our own experience, each country can best begin by examining its own history and the struggles of its people for social, economic and political progress.

British socialists can identify many sources from which our ideas have been drawn. The teachings of Jesus, calling upon us to 'love our neighbour as ourselves' acquired a revolutionary character when preached as a guide to social action. For example, when, in the Peasants Revolt of 1381, the Reverend John Ball, with his liberation theology, allied himself to a popular uprising, both he, the preacher, and Wat Tyler, the peasant leader, were killed and their followers scattered and crushed by the King.

The message of social justice, equality and democracy, is a very old one, and has been carried like a torch from generation to generation by a succession of popular and religious movements, by writers, philosophers, preachers, and poets, and has remained a focus of hope, that an alternative society could be constructed. The national political influences of these ideas was seen in 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and in the revolutions in England, America, France and Russia, each of which provided an important impetus to these hopes. But it was the Industrial Revolution, and the emergence of modern trade unionism in the 19th century which provided a solid foundation of common interest upon which these utopian dreams could be based, that gave the campaigns for political democracy and social advance their first real chance of success.

If British experience is unique — as it is — in the history of the working class movement, it lies in the fact that the Industrial Revolution began here, and gave birth to the three main economic philosophies which now dominate the thinking of the world.

The first was capitalism. Adam Smith, in his *Wealth of Nations* developed the concept of modern capitalism as the best way to release the forces of technology from the dead hand of a declining and corrupted feudalism, substituting the invisible hand of the market and paving the way for industrial expansion and, later, imperialism. The Manchester School of liberal economists and the liberal view of an extended franchise combined to create a power structure which still commands wide support among the establishment today.

The second was socialism. Robert Owen, the first man specifically identified as a socialist, also developed his ideas of socialism, cooperation and industrial trade unionism out of his experience of the workings of British capitalism. And the third was Marxism. Marx

and Engels also evolved many of their views of scientific socialism from a detailed examination of the nature of British capitalism and the conditions of the working class movement within it.

Yet, despite the fact that capitalism, socialism and Marxism all first developed in this country, only one of these schools of thought is now accepted by the establishment as being legitimate. Capitalism, its mechanisms, values and institutions are now being preached with renewed vigour by the British establishment under the influence of Milton Friedman. Socialism is attacked as being, at best, romantic or, at worst, destructive. And Marxism is identified as the anti-Christ against which the full weight of official opinion is continually pitted in the propaganda war of ideas.

### The distortion of Marxism

The term Marxist is used by the establishment to prevent it being understood. Even serious writers and broadcasters in the British media use the word Marxist as if it were synonymous with terrorism, violence, espionage, thought control, Russian imperialism and every act of bureaucracy attributable to the state machine in any country, including Britain, which has adopted even the mildest left of centre political or social reforms. The effect of this is to isolate Britain from having an understanding of, or a real influence in, the rest of the world, where Marxism is seriously discussed and not drowned by propaganda, as it is in our so-called free press. This ideological insularity harms us all.

This continuing barrage of abuse is maintained at such a high level of intensity that it has obliterated — as is intended — any serious public debate in the mainstream media on what Marxism is about. This negative propaganda is comparable to the treatment accorded to Christianity in non-Christian societies. Any sustained challenge to the existing order that cannot be answered on its merits is dismissed as coming from a Marxist, Communist, Trotskyite, or

extremist. All those suspected of Marxist views run the risk of being listed in police files, having their phones tapped and their career prospects stunted by blacklisting, just as those who advocate liberal ideas will be harassed in the USSR. Those who openly declare their adherence to Marxism are pilloried as self confessed Marxists, as if they had pleaded guilty to a serious crime and were held in custody awaiting trial.

Even the Labour Party, in which Marxist ideas have had a minority influence, is now described as a Marxist party, as if such a statement of itself put the party beyond the pale of civilised conduct, its arguments required no further answer, and its policies are entitled to no proper presentation to the public on the media. One aspect of this propaganda assault which merits notice is that it is mainly waged by those who have never studied Marx, and do not understand what he was saying, or why, yet still regard themselves as highly educated because they have passed all the stages necessary to acquire a university degree. For virtually the whole British establishment has been, at least until recently, educated without any real knowledge of Marxism, and is determined to see that these ideas do not reach the public. This constitutes a major weakness for the British people as a whole.

### Six Reasons why Marxism is feared

Why then is Marxism so widely abused? In seeking the answer to that question we shall find the nature of the Marxist challenge in the capitalist democracies. The danger of Marxism is seen by the establishment to lie in the following characteristics.

*First*, Marxism is feared because it contains an analysis of an inherent, ineradicable conflict between capital and labour — the theory of the class struggle. Until this theory was first propounded the idea of social class was widely understood and openly discussed by the upper and middle classes, as in England until Victorian times and later.

But when Marx launched the idea of working class solidarity, as a key to the mobilisation of the forces of social change and the inevitability of victory that that would secure, the term 'class' was conveniently dropped in favour of the idea of national unity around which there existed a supposed common interest in economic and social advance within our system of society, whether that common interest is real or not. Anyone today who speaks of class in the context of politics runs the risk of excommunication and outlawry. In short, they themselves become casualties in the class war which those who have fired on them claim does not exist.

*Second*, Marxism is feared because Marx's analysis of capitalism led him to a study of the role of state power as offering a supportive structure of administration, justice and law enforcement which, far from being objective and impartial in its dealings with the people, was, he argued, in fact an expression of the interests of the established order and the means by which it sustains itself. One recent example of this was Lord Denning's 1980 Dimbleby Lecture. It unintentionally confirmed that interpretation in respect of the judiciary and is interesting mainly because few 20th century judges have been foolish enough to let that cat out of the bag, where it has been quietly hiding for so many years.

*Third*, Marxism is feared because it provides the trade union and labour movement with an analysis of society that inevitably arouses political consciousness, taking it beyond wage militancy within capitalism. The impotence of much American trade unionism and the weakness of past non-political trade unionism in Britain have borne witness to the strength of the argument for a labour movement with a conscious political perspective that campaigns for the reshaping of society, and does not just compete with its own people for a larger part of a fixed share of money allocated as wages by those who



own capital, and who continue to decide what that share will be.

*Fourth*, Marxism is feared because it is international in outlook, appeals widely to working people everywhere, and contains within its internationalism a potential that is strong enough to defeat imperialism, neo-colonialism and multi-national business and finance, which have always organised internationally. But international capital has fended off the power of international labour by resorting to cynical appeals to nationalism by stirring up suspicion and hatred against outside enemies. This fear of Marxism has been intensified since 1917 by the claim that all international Marxism stems from the Kremlin, whose interests all Marxists are alleged to serve slavishly, thus making them, according to capitalist establishment propaganda, the witting or unwitting agents of the national interest of the USSR.

*Fifth*, Marxism is feared because it is seen as a threat to the older organised religions, as expressed through their hierarchies and temporal power structures, and their close alliance with other manifestations of state and economic power. The political establishments of the West, which for centuries have openly worshipped money and profit and ignored the fundamental teachings of Jesus do, in fact, sense in Marxism a moral challenge to their shallow and corrupted values and it makes them very uncomfortable. Ritualised and mystical religious teachings, which offer advice to the rich to be good, and the poor to be patient, each seeking personal salvation in this world and eternal life in the next, are also liable to be unsuccessful in the face of such a strong moral challenge as socialism makes.

There have, over the centuries, always been some Christians who, remembering the teachings of Jesus, have espoused these ideas and today there are many radical Christians who have joined hands with working people in their struggles. The liberation theology of Latin America proves this and thus deepens the anxieties of church and state in the West.

*Sixth*, Marxism is feared in Britain precisely because it is believed by many in the establishment to be capable of winning consent for radical change through its influence in the trade union movement, and then in the election of socialist candidates through the ballot box. It is indeed therefore because the establishment believes in the real possibility of an advance of Marxist ideas by fully democratic means that they have had to devote so much time and effort to the

## Even serious writers and broadcasters in the British media use the word Marxist as if it were synonymous with terrorism

misrepresentation of Marxism as a philosophy of violence and destruction, to scare people away from listening to what Marxists have to say.

These six fears, which are both expressed and fanned by those who defend a particular social order, actually pinpoint the wide appeal of Marxism, its durability and its strength more accurately than many advocates of Marxism may appreciate.

### Marxism and the Labour Party

The *Communist Manifesto*, and many other works of Marxist philosophy, have always profoundly influenced the British labour movement and the British Labour Party, and have strengthened our understanding and enriched our thinking.

It would be as unthinkable to try to construct the Labour Party without Marx as it would be to establish university faculties of astronomy, anthropology or psychology without permitting the study of Copernicus, Darwin or Freud, and still expect such faculties to be taken seriously.

There is also a practical reason for emphasising this point now. The attacks upon the so-called hard Left of the Labour Party by its opponents in the Conservative, Liberal and Social Democratic Parties and by the establishment, are not motivated by fear of the influence of Marxists alone. These attacks are really directed at all socialists and derive from the knowledge that democratic socialism in all its aspects does reflect the true interest of a majority of people in this country, and that what democratic socialists are saying is getting through to more and more people, despite the round-the-clock efforts of the media to fill the newspapers and the air-waves with a cacophony of distortion.

If the Labour Party could be bullied or persuaded to denounce its Marxists, the media having tasted blood would demand next that it expelled all its socialists and reunited the remaining Labour Party with the SDP to form a harmless alternative to the Conservatives, which could then be allowed to take office now and again when the Conservatives fell out of favour with the public. Thus, British capitalism, it is argued, would be made safe for ever, and socialism would be squeezed off the national agenda. But if such a strategy were to succeed — which it will not — it would in fact profoundly endanger British society. For it would open up the danger of a swing to the far right, as we have seen in Europe over the last 50 years.

### Weaknesses of the Marxist position

But having said all that about the importance of the Marxist critique, let me turn to the Marxist remedies for the ills that Marx so accurately diagnosed. There are many schools of thought within the Marxist tradition, and it would be as foolish to lump them all together as to bundle every Christian denomination into one and then seek to generalise about the faith. Nevertheless, there are certain aspects of the central Marxist analysis which it is necessary to subject to special scrutiny if the relationship between Marxism and democracy is to be explored.

I have listed some of these aspects because of their relevance to this Lecture, and which explain in part why I would not think it correct to call myself a Marxist.

Marx seemed to identify *all* social and personal morality as being a product of economic forces, thus denying to that morality any objective existence over and above the inter-relationship of social and economic forces at that moment in history. I cannot accept that analysis.

Of course the laws, customs, administration, armed forces and received wisdom in any society will tend to reflect the interests and values of the dominant class, and if class relationships change by technology, evolution or revolution, this will be reflected in a change of the social and cultural super-structure. But to go beyond that and deny the *inherent* rights of men and women to live, to think, to act, to argue or to obey or resist in pursuit of some inner call of conscience — as pacifists do — or to codify their relationships with each other in terms of moral responsibility, seems to me to be throwing away the child of moral teaching with the dirty bath water of feudalism, capitalism or clericalism.

In saying this I am consciously seeking to re-establish the relevance and legitimacy of the moral teachings of Jesus, whilst accepting that many manifestations of episcopal authority and ritualistic escapism have blanked out that essential message of human brotherhood and sisterhood. I say this for many reasons.

*First*, because without some concept of inherent human rights and moral values and obligations, derived by custom and practice out of the accumulated experience of our societies, I cannot see any valid reason why socialism should have any moral force behind it, or how socialism can relate directly to the human condition outside economic relationships; for example, as between women and men, black



WAT TYLER for his insolence is killed by WALWORTH and KING RICHARD puts himself at the Head of the REBELS.

and white, or in the relationships within the home and in personal life.

*Second*, because I regard the moral pressures released by radical Christian teaching, and its humanistic offshoots as having played a major role in developing the ideas of solidarity, democracy, equality and peace, which have contributed to the development of socialist motivation.

*Third*, because without the acceptance of a strong moral code the ends always can be argued to justify the means, and this lies at the root of some of the oppression which has been practised in actually existing socialist societies.

*Fourth*, because the teachings of Marx, like the teachings of Jesus, can also become obscured, lost, and even reversed by civil power systems established in states that proclaim themselves to be Marxist, just as many Christian kings and governors destroyed, by their actions, the faith they asserted they were sworn to defend. And if Jesus is to be acquitted of any responsibility for the tortures and murders conducted by the Inquisition, so must Marx be exonerated from any charges arising from the imprisonment and executions that occurred in Stalin's Russia.

*Fifth*, because without a real moral impulse and a warm human compassion, I cannot find any valid reason why Marx himself should have devoted so much of his time to works of scholarship and endless political activities, all of which were designed to achieve better conditions for his fellow creatures. That no doubt is why Marx is sometimes regarded as the last of the Old Testament prophets.

If I am asked where these moral imperatives come from it not from the inter-action of economic forces, my answer would be that they spring from the wells of human genius interacting upon our experience of life, which were also the sources of inspiration for Marx in his work.

It is very important for many reasons that religion and politics should not be separated into watertight compartments, for ever at war with each other. For centuries, the central social arguments and battles which we now see as political or economic, were conducted under the heading of religion. Many of the most important popular struggles were conceived by those who participated in them as being waged in pursuit of religious convictions. Similarly, some of the most oppressive political establishments exercised their power in the name of God.

Unless we are prepared to translate the religious vocabulary which



Adam Smith



Robert Owen

## Anyone today who speaks of class in the context of politics runs the risk of excommunication and outlawry.

served as a vehicle for political ideas for so many centuries into a modern vocabulary that recognises the validity of a scientific analysis both of nature, society, and its economic interests, we shall cut ourselves off from all those centuries of human struggle and experience and deny ourselves the richness of our own inheritance.

Marx and Marxist historians have, of course, consciously re-interpreted ancient history in the light of their own analysis, but no real dictionary can be restricted to a one-way translation based upon hindsight. We need a two-way translation to enable us to understand and utilise, if we wish to do so, the wisdom of earlier years to criticise contemporary society. It is in this context that I find some other aspects of Marxism unsatisfactory.

Marx made much of the difference between scientific socialism and utopian socialism, which he believed suffered from its failure to root itself in a vigorous study of the economic and political relationships between the social classes. The painstaking scholarship which he and Engels brought to bear upon capitalism has left us with a formidable set of analytical tools without which socialists today would have a much poorer theoretical understanding of the tasks which they are undertaking.

But having recognised that priceless analytic legacy that we owe to Marx, in one sense Marx himself was a utopian in that he appeared to believe that when capitalism had been replaced by socialism, and socialism by communism, a classless society, liberated by the final withering away of the state, would establish some sort of heaven on earth. Human experience does not, unfortunately, give us many grounds for sharing that optimism. For humanity cannot organise itself without some power structure of the state, and Marx seems to have underestimated the importance of Lord Acton's warning that power 'tends to corrupt' mistakenly believing this danger would disappear under communism.

### Morality, accountability and the British labour movement

It is here that both the moral argument referred to above, and the issue of democratic accountability, which have both played so large a part in the pre-Marxist and non-Marxist traditions of the British labour movement, can be seen to have such relevance.

For allowing for the weaknesses of Labourism, economism and

the anti-theoretical pragmatism which have characterised the British working class movement at its worst, two of the beliefs to which our movement has clung most doggedly were the idea that some actions were 'right' and others were 'wrong'; and to the obstinate determination to force those exercising political or economic power over us to accept the ultimate discipline of accountability, up to now seen mainly through the regular use of the ballot box, through which all adults would have their say in a universal suffrage to elect or dismiss governments.

The British working class movement has over the years clung passionately to these twin ideas of morality and accountability in politics and they constitute the backbone of our faith. Some Marxists might argue that these objectives are too limited, are not specifically socialist, and constitute little more than a cover for collaborationist strategies which underpin bourgeois capitalist liberal democracy, complete with its soothing religious tranquillisers.

I readily admit that a humanitarian morality and accountability are not enough, in themselves, to establish socialism, but they are essential if socialism is to be established, and if socialism is to be worth having at all. A socialist economic transformation may be achieved by force, but if so, it then cannot be sustained by agreement, and socialism may degenerate into the imposition of a regime administered by those whose attempts to maintain it can actually undermine it rather than develop it.

### **The issue of parliamentary democracy**

How then, on this analysis, should we approach the arguments between the Marxist and some non-Marxist socialists which have in the past centred around their different assessment of the importance that should be attached to the role of parliamentary democracy?

Before we can do that we have to examine, in some detail, what is meant by the phrase parliamentary democracy, for it lends itself to many definitions. Seen from the viewpoint of the establishment, Britain has enjoyed parliamentary government since 1295. All that has happened in the intervening period is that the Queen-in-Parliament has agreed to exercise the Crown's powers constitutionally.

This means accepting legislation passed 'by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled' and accepting that an elected majority in the House of Commons is entitled to expect that its leader will be asked to form an administration by the Crown; and that that administration will be composed of Her Majesty's ministers, who in their capacity as Crown advisers will be free to use the Royal prerogatives to administer and control the civil and military services of the Crown.

These democratic advances are circumscribed in four significant respects.

*First*, in practice by the actual problems confronting an elected Labour government in establishing democratic control over the highly secretive self-directing and hierarchical executive of state power.

*Second*, by the constitutional power of the Crown to dismiss a government and dissolve a parliament at any time.

*Third*, by the fact that a government so dismissed, and a parliament so dissolved, lose all legal rights over the state machine and all legislative powers.

*Fourth*, by the subordination of all United Kingdom legislation even when it has received the Royal Assent, to the superior authority of Common Market Law or Court judgements, which take precedence, under the European Communities Act, over domestic legislation, where the two conflict. It is worth noting that British accession to the EEC involved, in this sense, a major diminution of the powers of the Crown, in that Royal Assent to legislation rendered invalid by the EEC is itself invalid.

Set out baldly like that, it can be seen that in a formal sense Britain is far less democratic in its form of government than those countries whose peoples may elect a President, both Houses of their Legislature and have entrenched their rights in written constitutional safeguards. Why then does the British labour movement appear to be so satisfied with our democratic institutions?

In one sense, of course, it is not. The abolition of the House of Lords and the abrogation of British accession to the Treaty of Rome are amongst the items likely to feature high on the agenda for the next Labour manifesto.

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**Those who call themselves revolutionary socialists and denounce the rest of us as nothing more than left-talking reformists, are not, in my judgment, real revolutionaries at all.**

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The Labour Party just assumes that the Crown will always act with scrupulous care within the constitutional conventions that govern the use of the prerogative, and for that reason have never put this issue on its political agenda. Beyond that Labour believes that the reality of power precludes the possibility that our democratic rights might be overturned by an abnormal use of those formal powers which still reside in the non-elected elements of our constitution. In sharp contrast to the establishment view, Labour's broad interpretation of the parliamentary democracy we have secured is that by a succession of extra-parliamentary struggles over the centuries the Crown was made accountable to parliament, the Lords were made subordinate to the Commons and the Commons were, through regular election, subordinated to the will of the electorate, made up first of men and later of women too, who have won, in fact, if not yet in constitutional theory, the sovereign rights which belong to the people — which is what democracy is all about.

It is manifestly true that such an achievement, formidable as it is, falls short of a constitutional entrenchment of the sovereignty of the people, and that it secures no more than the right to dismiss governments and MPs and substitute new MPs and new governments. It certainly does not offer, of itself, any control over the extra-parliamentary centres of financial or economic power, which remain whichever government has been elected, or even guarantee ministerial or parliamentary power over the apparatus of the state. To that extent, democracy in Britain is still partial and political but not economic or social.

But if, as I believe, the real strength of parliamentary democracy lies in the fact that the power to remove governments without violent revolution is now vested in the people, that is a very significant gain which should not be dismissed as being of little account, a fraud to be exposed, by-passed and replaced.

One of the reasons why the British Labour Party and the British people are so suspicious of certain supposedly revolutionary schools of Marxist thought is that they believe that insufficient attention is paid by them to the importance of our democratic institutions, thus defined; and fear that if they were to be dismantled we should lose what we struggled so hard and so long to achieve. We would then be set back, perhaps with no gains to show for it. Parliamentary democracy is an evolving system, not yet fully developed, which enjoys wide support for what it has achieved so far.

### **The myth of revolutionary activity in Britain**

Given the fact that all our rights in parliament have been won by struggle, I must add that I have not observed any serious revolutionary movements pledged to destroy parliament anywhere across the

whole spectrum of socialist parties of the Left in Britain today.

Those who call themselves revolutionary socialists and denounce the rest of us as nothing more than left-talking reformists, are not, in my judgment, real revolutionaries at all. They are nothing more than left-talking revolutionists, who, while pointing to the deficiencies in our parliamentary democracy, offer themselves as candidates for parliament, and none of them are planning an armed revolution or a general strike to secure power by a *coup d'etat*. If such people do exist I have not met them, heard of them, or become aware of any influence they have in any known political party or grouping of the Left.

Nor for that matter is there much hard evidence to suggest that there would be wide public support for a counter-revolution to topple an elected Labour government by force on the Chilean model.

I appreciate that in playing down some of the most cherished fears of both ultra Left and ultra Right, I am laying myself open to a charge of naivete, and depriving the mass media of one of their favourite and most spine-chilling horror myths, which they use to undermine public support for socialism.

If there ever were to be a right wing coup in Britain it would not be carried out by paratroopers landing in central London, as it once seemed they would land in Paris just before de Gaulle came to power, but by an attempt to repeat what happened to Gough Whitlam when the Governor-General dismissed him as Prime Minister. And if the labour movement and the Left were ever to resort to force in Britain, it would not be to overthrow an elected government but to prevent the overthrow of an elected government, ie, in defence of, and not in defiance of, parliamentary democracy. It is, in this sense, and only in this sense, that the use of popular force would ever be contemplated by the labour and socialist movements.

### **The role of extra-parliamentary activity**

Though these may seem to be highly theoretical matters, it is necessary, to complete the analysis, to refer briefly to the varying circumstances in which popular action is legitimate.

There is clearly an inherent right to take up arms against tyranny or dictatorship, to establish or uphold democracy, on exactly the same basis, and for the same reasons, that the nation will respond to a call to arms to defeat a foreign invasion, or repel those who have successfully occupied a part of our territory.

In a different context, we accept certain more limited rights to defy the law on grounds of conscience, or to resist laws that threaten basic and long established liberties, as for example if parliament were to prolong its life, and remove the electoral rights of its citizens. The defence of ancient and inherent rights, as for example the rights of women, or of trade unionists, or of minority communities, could legitimately lead to some limited civil disobedience, accompanied by an assertion that the responsibility for it rested upon those who had removed these rights in the first place. And, at the very opposite end of this scale of legitimate opposition, lies the undoubted right to act directly to bring public pressure, from outside parliament, to bear upon parliament to secure a redress of legitimate grievances. Such extra-parliamentary activity has played a long and honourable part in the endless struggle to win basic rights.

To assert that extra-parliamentary activity is synonymous with anti-parliamentary conspiracies is to blur a distinction that it is essential to draw with scientific precision if we are to understand what is happening and not to mistake a democratic demonstration for an undemocratic riot; a democratic protest for an undemocratic uprising; or a democratic reformer for an undemocratic revolutionary.

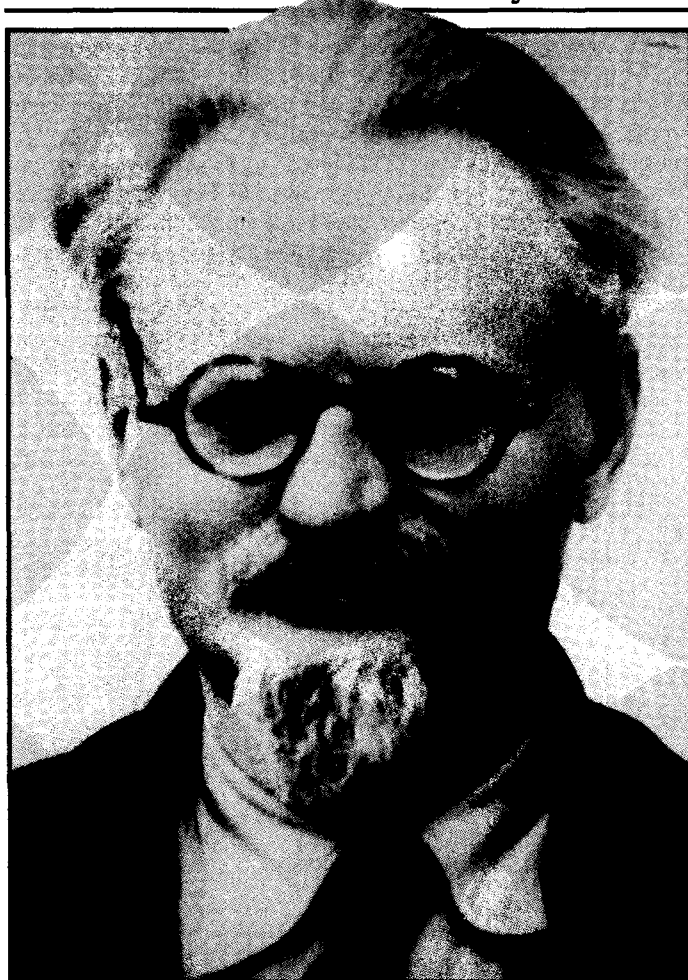
The labour movement in Britain, egged on by a hostile media, is

now engaged in a microscopic examination of its own attitude to the role of extra-parliamentary activity. Such an examination can only help to advance socialism. Perhaps the simplest way to understand these issues is to examine the attitude of the Conservative Party to the same issues. The Tory Party and its historical predecessors have never wasted a moment's valuable time upon such constitutional niceties. Throughout our whole history, the owners of land, the banks and our industries, have been well aware that their power lay almost entirely outside parliament, and their interest in parliament was confined to a determination to maintain a majority there to

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**Trotsky should be remembered as the first and most significant Soviet dissident, hunted and later murdered by Stalin.**

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safeguard their interests by legislating to protect them. Extra-parliamentary activity has been a way of life for the ruling classes, from the Restoration, through to the overthrow of the 1931 Labour government, and the election in 1979 of Mrs Thatcher.

In power they use parliament to protect their class interests and reward their friends. In opposition they use the Lords, where they always have a majority, to frustrate the Labour majority in the Commons, and supplement this with a sustained campaign of extra-parliamentary activity to undermine the power of Labour governments by investment strikes, attacks upon the pound sterling, granting or withholding business confidence, all using, when necessary, the power of the IMF, the multinationals and the media.

Labour has real power outside parliament, and the people we represent can only look to an advance of their interests and of the

prospects of socialism if Labour MPs harness themselves to the movement outside and develop a strong partnership which alone can infuse fresh life into parliament as an agent of democratic change.

These matters and the associated issues of party democracy have received a great deal of attention within the labour movement over the last few years and it is not hard to see why. We want the Labour Party to practise the accountability it preaches. Seen in that light, the adherence of the labour movement to parliamentary democracy, and our determination to expand it, becomes a great deal more than a romantic attachment to liberal capitalist bourgeois institutions. By contrast, it can be seen to have a crucial role to play in achieving greater equality and economic democracy.

### The critiques of Leon Trotsky examined

Those who dismiss the role of parliamentary democracy, thus defined, can be seen to be engaged in weakening, rather than strengthening, the prospects of establishing a durable, democratic socialist society. In this context there are some within the Labour movement who have underestimated the potentiality of the democratic foothold which has been established in parliament. This misjudgment of what can be achieved is, in particular, associated with the school of thought inspired by Leon Trotsky, who rejected the Soviet system as it evolved after the death of Lenin, when Stalin imposed a rigid, centralised and ruthless tyranny in the name of socialism.

Trotsky has had an immense influence on the world socialist movement, so much so that many different Trotskyite groups have been established. Trotsky should be remembered as the first and most significant Soviet dissident, hunted and later murdered by Stalin. His critiques of Stalinism merit respectful study and his contemptuous expose of the milk-and-water socialism of some

Labour leaders in the 1920s in his book *Whither Britain*, entitles him to a place in our history. He was the first man to identify and warn against the betrayal of Ramsay MacDonald and to prophesy the birth of the SDP 55 years before it was formed. Moreover, he did urge the German Left to unite against the Nazis. But having said all that, Trotsky's profound ambivalence about the nature of parliamentary democracy led him into error, both of judgment and of prescription.

As I have said earlier, I do not believe that those socialists in Britain who claim to represent the views of Trotsky, are in any sense serious revolutionaries. They constitute schools of socialist thought whose ideas need to be discussed and argued over. In my view, the weakness of their argument lies in their underestimate of what has been and can be achieved, and the confusion which they perpetuate between the absence of actual reform and the inevitability that reform, if pressed, is bound to fail.

The constraints on capital and the gains achieved by the trade union and labour movement over the years have been formidable. It is, I believe, a major error to argue that the advocacy of reform, rather than of revolution, is synonymous with betrayal and capitulation, for it undermines the very working class confidence which is central to the success of the movement, spreading pessimism about the prospects of victory — which is what the establishment has been trying to do for centuries. Some followers of Trotsky appear to substitute a ritualistic and dogmatic recitation of slogans which cannot connect with the life experience of those they are hoping to reach, thus minimising their public influence. Moreover, by suggesting that parliamentary democracy has only a limited role to play, and by speaking vaguely of direct action to by-pass it, they seem to imply that socialism can be introduced by some industrial coup. They are also unacceptably vague about what would follow such an event if it ever occurred.

Tom Nairn

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**without the acceptance of a strong moral code the end always can be argued to justify the means**

But we must never forget that a socialist government that came to power by the exercise of industrial muscle, rather than by election, would be compelled to retain itself in office by a similar exercise of industrial power. Even if such a government could retain its formal control of all the instruments of state power, attacks by the forces marshalled against it by capital would rapidly intensify. Such forces would also be able to claim that, in the circumstances, they were also the champions of democracy.

This combination of intense pressure from the dethroned domestic establishment, international capitalism and an angry electorate deprived of the traditional ballot box rights, would almost certainly overpower the new government and release counter-revolutionary forces on a massive scale, against which no effective democratic defence could be mounted, because all those who once believed in parliamentary democracy would have been demoralised by what had occurred.

Having said all that, I am profoundly opposed to any attempt to outlaw, expel or excommunicate the followers of Leon Trotsky from the Labour Party. Some of them may, as I believe, be too simplistic in their analysis of Britain but, if so, the correct response is to discuss the issues with them, and within the labour movement these discussions are taking place and are exercising a mutual influence on those who take part on both sides.

The main recruiting agents for Trotsky's ideas in Britain have been those who have so cynically betrayed their faith in both socialism and democracy, while occupying high positions with the parliamentary Labour leadership, and then defected to the Social Democrats. These right-wing entryists used their positions as Labour MPs to obstruct the advance to socialism, and retain their seats in defiance of democracy.

But no comment on the role of revolution would be complete without adding that what applies in the context of Britain, does not necessarily apply in countries that have not won the rights we have.

The Russian people could never have won power through the

Duma in Tsarist Russia, nor could the Zimbabwe Africans through Ian Smith's rigged electoral system. The revolutionary route to democracy is almost certainly the only one open to the peoples of South Africa, Turkey, El Salvador and Chile, and many countries which the West so dishonestly classify as 'our partners' in the free world.

Here in Britain we have acquired, by struggle, precious democratic rights which we must defend and extend. I believe that communist countries could best evolve their socialism by consent if they studied and applied our experience.

### **The problems that face a socialist government in Britain**

In saying that, we also know that a Labour electoral victory, with a working majority on a socialist programme, could unleash tremendous opposition, including serious extra-parliamentary pressures.

These will be formidable obstacles to overcome. Yet overcome them we must. Our best prospect of doing so lies, not in abandoning democracy, but in deepening it and widening it to win the public support upon which we shall have to rely. If we are to do that we must, above all, have confidence in the democratic process, and anyone who spreads doubts about its efficacy is abandoning the battle before it has even begun.

At least we can comfort ourselves with the certain knowledge that however inadequate parliamentary democracy may seem to be to some in the labour movement, the establishment think otherwise. Socialist rhetoric they can live with easily, and revolutionary opportunism plays straight into their hands. But they know a real challenge when they see one and believe that parliamentary democracy, buttressed and sustained by a free, democratic and politically committed labour and trade union movement outside, can and will be strong enough to effect radical socialist reforms.

Let me sum up this section on democracy and Marxism in Britain in this way.

*First*, that Marxism occupies an integral part in our socialist tradition, and without it we should fail to understand the system we are seeking to change.

*Second*, that the commitment of the British labour movement to parliamentary democracy, linked closely to the organisations of labour in the country, is not only right in principle but also offers the best way forward along the road to socialist transformation by consent. This is the process that the majority of the people of Britain have used, are using and must use to advance their interests.

### **The experience of Marxist societies**

I now want to turn to the experience of socialist societies founded by Marxist leaderships, and consider how they are responding to the pressure for democratic rights from their own people. It is an historical fact that such societies, almost without exception, emerged in countries which previously had no vehicle for peaceful transformation available.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 against the Tsar took place against a background of war in a country without an established parliamentary democracy. The same was true of Yugoslavia, where the partisans liberated the country from the Germans and established a socialist state. In China the Communists fought against the Japanese invaders and the forces of Chiang Kai Shek who was backed by the USA. In Cuba socialism also emerged out of civil war against the dictator Batista. The socialist regimes in Eastern Europe came into being as a result of the war and were imposed by the USSR as part of its security policy to protect itself from attack after three invasions from the West — 1914, 1920 and 1941 — which had cost the lives of well over 20 million people.

All that is a matter of historical record and those who took power by force could lay claim to the same legitimacy as was asserted by the American colonists in 1776, or the French revolutionaries in 1789. And this is the route followed by colony after colony as they won that freedom from undemocratic imperialist control.

But the Stalinist distortion of Marxism created a political system that followed revolution based upon the theory of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. This followed on from a period under Lenin when Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were actually both represented in the Soviets. Under Stalin's doctrine, the overthrow of capitalism by the working class had been undertaken by the Communist Party as the self-styled leadership of that class.

However, this historical explanation of how the revolutions were planned and executed at the time does not end the matter. For socialism achieved by revolution lacks the explicit endorsement of the people, which is what democracy is about, and the Communist Parties which control such countries by limiting or denying basic rights of political expression, assembly, organisation and debate, and the right of the people to remove their governments, are open to the abuses of civil rights which occurred under Stalin and continue today. Governments ruling by force — whether socialist or not — are also permanently vulnerable to violent upheaval and the task of liberalisation is difficult. And in a world of rapid communications, undemocratic regimes will find it increasingly hard to survive.

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**It is very important for many reasons that religion and politics should not be separated into watertight compartments, for ever at war with each other.**

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Events in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, where Soviet troops were sent in to restore order after expressions of popular discontent, revealed this vulnerability, and undermined the claim of the Communist Parties there to enjoy majority support. Similarly, the imposition of martial law in Poland, though it may, in practice, have averted a Soviet invasion, has also confirmed the public unacceptability in Poland of the Communist regime as it was. The Western media make much of this, whilst ignoring the dictatorships which exist under the protection of the West.

But above all, in the USSR itself, 65 years after the revolution, the maintenance of a government by state power — even when three generations have been born under communism, and only the very oldest people remember pre-revolutionary days — suggests, to outsiders, that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union does not itself believe that its leadership would receive popular endorsement. Yet the very refreshment of socialism must require at least a genuine public choice between alternative views as to how it should develop.

Socialism as a system is greatly weakened, world-wide, if it is seen to rest anywhere upon state enforcement. The forces of capital in the West have concentrated their attack upon democratic socialism — to good effect — by suggesting, quite falsely, that what is being advocated in the West involves the imposition of a Soviet-style regime upon our society and that the first election won by socialists would also be the last. They know it is not true, and it is a sign of the strength of socialist ideas that they have to pretend that they believe it.

The British labour movement not only accepts the democratic process but claims, correctly, to have created it. We will never accept a socialism that is imposed.

#### **Liberalisation and detente and the emergence of Eurocommunism**

The Soviet Union's control of Eastern Europe — entrenched in the

Brezhnev doctrine — is in fact based on security considerations for the USSR. If the pressure for political freedom is denied in these countries, and there are popular uprisings, then the Soviet Union may believe its security depends upon an intervention to suppress them, with the most serious international consequences up to, and including, the risk of nuclear war.

Therefore, for practical reasons, a framework for the liberalisation of Eastern Europe should be developed which does not carry with it any threat to Soviet security. It is for this reason that the campaigns for European nuclear disarmament, a new pan-European security system to replace NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and for more economic cooperation between East and West, are so important. Liberalisation can only occur in an atmosphere of detente.

The emergence of Eurocommunism in Western Europe offers us fresh hope here.

The Italian Communist Party, for example, which accepts the need for a pluralistic political system, that guarantees the right of the electorate to replace communist governments in free elections, brings Eurocommunists back towards the mainstream of democratic socialism, and provides a direct link with the libertarian Marxists in the communist world.

Here too, the British Communist Party and its programme *The British Road to Socialism* can be seen as pointing in a similar direction, and differentiates the party from its earlier and uncritical pro-Soviet stance which isolated it from the democratic traditions of the British labour movement.

#### **Socialism, democracy and Marxism**

##### **The need for dialogue**

In conclusion, may I make it clear that I believe a reconciliation of Marxism and political democracy is possible, necessary and urgent, if humanity is to solve the pressing problems which confront it and avoid the risk of war. But if we are to achieve that synthesis, there is much that needs to be done, and I suggest a draft agenda that we might use to guide us.

*First*, the acceptance in the West of the importance of the socialist analysis of society within which Marxism must be seen as playing a key role.

*Second*, the acceptance in the socialist societies of the principle of democratic accountability and full political rights as central to the practice of socialism.

*Third*, the beginning of a regular series of structured national and international dialogues between socialists, Eurocommunists and Marxists of all schools of thought, to explore the relationship between democracy and Marxism and the experience of actually existing socialist parties and socialist societies.

*Fourth*, the reunification of the world trade union movement, which was divided during the cold war when the ICFTU broke away from the WFTU, partly to permit a reunited world trade union movement to enter into the dialogue described above.

To attempt these tasks will meet with powerful opposition even though they represent a very modest start for a process that will need to continue over a long period.

For it is essential that an understanding of Marxism should become more widely available to strengthen the world-wide democratic movement, and that the practice of democracy be harnessed to protect the integrity of Marxism from the corruption of power which is inescapable under any system of government which seeks to impose itself without popular consent.

If the peoples of the world are to end exploitation, reduce the levels of violence, avoid nuclear war, and enter into their rightful inheritance at last, we must achieve a synthesis of socialism and freedom and work for it here and now. □



## Keith Dixon and Daniel Perraud The French Experiment

**France has seen a year of far-reaching reforms. But the Right is on the move and the Left is vulnerable.**

During the run-up to the presidential elections in France a year ago two contrasting scenarios of an eventual Socialist victory were presented by the critics of Francois Mitterrand. The Right predicted ominously that with Mitterrand elected president the way would be open for a Marxist take-over which, along Chilean lines, would lead to economic chaos, a violent polarisation of social and political forces and inevitably to civil war. On the Left, the Communist Party warned of the quite different danger of a Socialist-dominated government abandoning its programme under capitalist pressure, postponing the task of socialist transformation of society and thus betraying the hopes and expectations of the working class. The reality of left wing rule over the past twelve months has turned out to be quite different.

Undoubtedly there has been a polarisation of political forces, and a radicalisation of right wing opposition among certain strata of the population (farmers, small employers, for example); however, there are as yet no signs of the apocalypse promised by the Right.

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**The key word 'change', used amply during the election campaign, meant very different things to different people.**

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Although there have been signs of growing dissatisfaction and impatience in the working class, this can hardly be said to be due to the 'betrayal' of the Mauroy government, which, on the contrary, has given a radical thrust to certain policies derived from the electoral programme of Francois Mitterrand.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, neither creeping social democratisation nor a radical destabilisation of capitalist society, the present French experiment defies

the comfortable, clear-cut categories inherited from the past. Several factors contribute to making the French situation quite distinct both from previous periods in French history (1936, 1945) and from Left governments elsewhere.

### **Special characteristics**

Firstly, the Left in France is deeply divided despite the participation of the two major parties in government. For three years (1978-1981) after the official break in left unity, Communists and Socialists were in open conflict, hurling slogans and the occasional insult at each other. The election results of May-June 1981 did nothing to resolve or overcome these divergences. The necessary facade of 'governmental solidarity' on the basis of left unity, around a scanty joint agreement signed in June 1981, simply drove the divergences unhealthily underground. All the old grievances remain not only between Communists and Socialists, but probably also within the Socialist Party where the right wing anti-Marxist rival of Mitterrand, Michel Rocard, now Minister of the Plan, continues to have substantial support. This is undoubtedly one of the major handicaps of the government, which has not only led to certain incoherencies and contradictions on a policy level, but also prevents a clear statement of political and economic objectives.

Secondly, despite this lack of clarity with respect to the overall objectives of government strategy, the Mauroy government has been implementing a radical programme of economic and social reform — sometimes under the combined pressure of hostile forces both in

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<sup>1</sup>The new government's programme is very largely inspired by Mitterrand's political platform during the presidential elections; his '110 Proposals for France' were adopted by the extraordinary Congress of the Socialist Party at Creteil, in January 1981.

Mauroy



Rocard



France and abroad — but in an ultra-parliamentary manner. Since the Left government came to power a year ago, there has been virtually no popular mobilisation in favour of government policies and very little extra-parliamentary pressure.

Thirdly, the Left has come to power in a country which has been dominated for more than twenty years by right wing rule. This unbroken domination enabled the Right, particularly during the Gaullist period from 1958 until 1974, to extend its political hegemony throughout all the major state institutions, to impregnate social relations with its modes of thought, and to win over, by various means, substantial sectors of the population, in particular the farming community and the self-employed. The relations between the state and industry, between the repressive apparatus (police, judicial system etc) and the population, the functioning of the state-controlled media all bear the mark of these last twenty years. Thus although the right wing parties suffered an undoubted political defeat a year ago, and despite the present back-biting and internal disputes particularly within the former presidential party, the UDF,<sup>2</sup> the Right continues to dispose of a powerful means of opposing government policies by fostering discontent in its traditional non-wage-earning support strata.

Fourthly, the highly authoritarian and anti-democratic constitution, made to measure for De Gaulle in 1958, is being used by Mitterrand and Mauroy in order to keep a tight rein on the direction of the government. Each measure implemented by the government has been subject to the interaction of various contradictory pressures resulting from the present political situation: within the Left, between those in favour of radicalising to a maximum the process of social change already underway (PCF and the left wing of the Socialist Party) and those who have opted for a more accommodative strategy of compromise (the Rocardians, but also the influential Minister of the Economy, Jacques Delors) and from the Right, where a highly reactionary opposition to government policy has been growing (see below, our discussion of industrial and agricultural strategies). The constitution bestows exorbitant powers on the President of the Republic and makes him of more central political importance than either the National Assembly or the government. Mitterrand has made the most of these powers to prevent stalemate on major policy issues.

Lastly, an unfair electoral system has enabled the Socialist Party, with only one third of the votes in the general elections, to obtain an

overall majority in the National Assembly until 1986. Thus, in institutional terms the Socialists are free to do as they wish, and are dependent neither on the Communists nor on the Left Radicals for pushing their legislation through parliament. This undoubtedly explains certain signs of over-confidence during the first months of power — but it also renders all the more surprising the policies adopted by the Socialist-dominated government over the last twelve months.

#### THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMME

When the Mauroy government took office a year ago, it was by no means clear what type of policies would be pursued. The government programme was to be based on Mitterrand's presidential election platform — but betrayed electoral promises are a commonplace in modern French political history. This was all the more likely since the motivations of the left electorate in the May-June elections were not crystal-clear either. Undoubtedly, the radical anti-capitalist policies of the Communist Party had resonated well beyond the declining Communist electorate (16.1% in the general elections). But this was not the only current of opinion. The Left also benefited from a desire for political change due to a general weariness with the politics and politicians of the Right. The key word 'change' however, used amply during the election campaign and since then, meant very different things to different people. Thus, in particular behind the Socialist vote lay heterogeneous and sometimes contradictory political attitudes. Many Centre-Right voters, for example, who shifted towards the Socialists twelve months ago clearly believed that Mitterrand, like Giscard before him, would quickly turn his back on his election platform. In these conditions, one of the major surprises of the first year of Left government has been the radical content given to the vague notion of 'change' by the Socialist-dominated coalition.

In the economic sphere the government has reversed the ultra-classical logic of the previous prime minister, Raymond Barre (austerity, budget restrictions, orthodox defence of the franc, anti-working class repression etc) by a series of measures intended to reflate the economy. Real efforts have been made to increase working class purchasing power and therefore home demand. Priority has been given to small and medium-sized firms in industry through increased subsidies and various compensatory measures to offset the effects of certain social reforms (the increase in the minimum wage,

for example). Above all, the government has clearly stated that it considers the reduction of unemployment to be its major task<sup>1</sup> and has acted accordingly (a projected boost of 500,000 jobs created over the next two years — 40,000 already created in the public sector before December 1981; the reduction of working time, with the objective of a 35-hour week in 1985; the lowering of the retirement age to 60; a vast programme of professional training for the 16 to 18 year olds intended to totally absorb youth unemployment in this age bracket etc).

Major structural changes which are likely to change the face of the French economy, and French society as a whole, have already been undertaken. Through the extensive *nationalisation programme*, the state will take control of key sectors of industry: almost all steel and aluminium production, half of glass production, most of the light chemicals industry, most electrical engineering and electronics, half of computer production, and a substantial share of the building and pharmaceuticals industry. By nationalising almost all of the banking sector, the state will be able to control the financing of its industrial programme. Plans to democratise the public sector, by giving extended powers to plant and workshop committees are considered as a necessary antidote to the danger of bureaucratisation in this area, and are to be presented to the National Assembly this year.

Similarly, the *decentralisation programme* which is now underway, although nothing very radical from a British point of view, undoubtedly constitutes a major break with what has become the debilitating tradition of Jacobin centralism. The transfer of power to the regional assemblies, the abolition of the all-powerful nominated post of prefect etc, are a major advance, and a necessary pre-condition for the all-round development of democratic control — another of the stated objectives of the government.

### Who Should Pay?

Quite obviously many of these economic and social reforms have been costly, and a muted battle has been going on within the government, and on the Left in general, concerning the means of financing them. Here again two opposing positions have been expressed — more or less explicitly — by government supporters. The Communists have, on several occasions, insisted on a more resolute deduction from capitalist profits.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Rocard and Delors have both insisted on the need for caution, and have — more or less directly — advanced the idea of long term austerity measures (these ideas have had a favourable echo in the right wing of the trade union movement, particularly in the leadership of the CFDT).

In reality the government has used a combination of traditional and more progressive devices in order to cover these increased costs. It has increased the tax burden and the budget deficit. Although the population in general has had to pay through indirect taxes (petrol, tobacco etc) and through a special contribution of 1% of all wages to cover the Social Security deficit, special attention has also been given to the well-off: an exceptional tax on banks and oil companies; increased income tax for high income groups; a wealth tax, which although much diluted after a long battle in parliament nonetheless constitutes a progressive innovation.

### Ambiguities

Despite more egalitarian measures concerning income or taxes, and the progressive economic and social reforms intended to redistribute power in favour of the working class outlined above, one of the major support strata of the Left, the industrial working class, has been showing signs of disillusionment and impatience over the last few months. Since the end of the six-month 'honeymoon' period at the

turn of the year, industrial unrest — strikes and factory occupations — has been on the increase. Why has this been so?

The first and most obvious answer to this question is that the Left government is engaged on a long term strategy, and thus the beneficial effects of some of its major policies (the nationalisations, for example) have not yet been felt by the population. Moreover, the social measures adopted during the summer months of 1981 have had a reduced impact for two main reasons: their political resonance within the working class has been limited in that they mainly affected certain 'marginal', ie, largely unorganised categories (low-paid workers, old-age pensioners, immigrants etc); and all the measures which have been taken in order to increase purchasing power

## Since the Left government came to power a year ago, there has been virtually no popular mobilisation in favour of government policies and very little extra-parliamentary pressure.

have been offset to a certain extent by the still relatively high rate of inflation (13-14%).

Secondly, and despite the radical thrust of many of the Left government's policies, the overall strategy remains ambiguous: transition towards socialism, social democratic restructuring of a capitalist society in crisis, or some other uncharted non-capitalist solution? At no time has the government — or the Left coalition — made explicit its long term objectives, nor the means, other than parliamentary, which it intends using to obtain its ends. Quite obviously because these questions have not been hammered out within the Left, there has been a refusal to associate the working class in a full discussion of long term orientations. Even if this ambiguity has been inevitable — because of the deep divisions between Left parties, and the political heterogeneity of the dominant Socialist Party, not to mention the narrow margin of manoeuvre open to the Left and the strength of the Right in certain key social strata — it is nonetheless one of the principal causes of present discontent.

### THE OPPOSITION: A RIGHT-WING COMEBACK

Whereas the Left has been unable to raise support in the working class and the government has been wary of extra-parliamentary action in favour of its policies, the opposition on the other hand, has been extremely active, from the very outset and despite its internal difficulties, in rallying support, particularly among the non-wage-earning strata of the population (farmers, for example). It should have come as no surprise that in the recent local elections on the 14 and 21 of March, in which the Left gave a very poor showing indeed,<sup>5</sup> the Right made its most significant advances in the rural areas. After the disarray of the immediate post-election period last summer and despite the animosity of certain UDF leaders towards

<sup>1</sup>Union pour la Democratie Francaise.

<sup>2</sup>The government's stated and realistic objective is to curb the rise of unemployment in 1982 (it topped the two million mark in Nov 1981) and only to begin to reduce the number of unemployed in 1983. To obtain these results the government is relying on an ambitious annual economic growth rate of 3%.

<sup>3</sup>Given the 'delicate' position of the PCF as a junior partner in government, these anti-capitalist positions have been expressed more clearly by the CGT, which is largely influenced by the Communists.

<sup>4</sup>Although the Socialist Party maintained its influence, the Left as a whole regressed (in particular compared with the last local election results in 1976). The Communist Party, with 15.85%, not only did not improve its June 1981 score, but regressed slightly. On the Right, the RPR leapt forward.

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the RPR — which they hold to be partly responsible for Giscard's downfall — the Right has reorganised, and at present is clearly being restructured around the authoritarian, markedly right wing orientations of Jacques Chirac, leader of the neo-Gaullist RPR.<sup>6</sup>

It is however *not* within the specifically political sphere that the Right parties have been making most headway — after all, in purely electoral terms there is little prospect of a Right comeback before the next general elections in 1986 — but rather on the industrial and social fronts, where organised and sometimes violent opposition to government policies has been fostered. Two examples — one in which the Right was nonetheless defeated, and another in which the government had to step down — should help to illustrate this point.

### Industrial strategy under fire

The key question of nationalisation and the democratisation of industry gave rise to the major political clash of the first year of Left government. The initial battle was complicated by the fact that the Socialist Party was apparently technically ill-prepared for the discussions involved in the nationalisation debate, and that the top civil servants who were supposed to advise the government deliberately trailed their feet.

This was one of the rare occasions in contemporary French history in which the employers entered directly into the political struggle. Thus, within the nationalisable firms, a campaign was carried on by top management in order to provoke opposition to the government's plans among the employees and management staff; similarly, the nationalisable banks campaigned among their customers in order to raise discontent. Shareholders of the major nationalisable firms were rapidly organised into a lobby against the government. One holding company, Paribas, even went as far as deliberately to sabotage the government's project by clandestinely selling off important subsidiaries abroad.

While the bosses were waging the economic battle, the parties of the Right were fighting the nationalisations politically, making full use of their foothold in the media and multiplying meetings throughout the country. Right wing leaders conjured up images of an imminent French gulag, and used every conceivable argument to show that the radical Marxist Left had taken over, and was planning the wholesale collectivisation of the French economy. The RPR leader, Jacques Chirac, apparently converted to the virtues of Reaganism, preached against all forms of state intervention and warned that the French economy was on the brink of disaster. Meanwhile, in the National Assembly the UDF and RPR parties combined their efforts in order to block the nationalisation bill. The debate lasted 13 days, and 1438 amendments were proposed. When the battle was over in the National Assembly, the Right blocked again in its stronghold, the Senate . . . and finally appealed to the Constitutional Council (entirely composed of former parliamentary figures of the Right), which sent back the bill to be corrected and watered down.

Despite extraordinary pressure from home and abroad, and while continuing to respect a constitution which was being politically manipulated against it, the Left remained surprisingly united on this issue. Although several influential ministers (including the Minister of the Economy) were known to be hostile to the nationalisation programme, the government nonetheless held on until the end, and the bill was finally voted in February of this year. Although the programme was more limited than some (the Communists) would have hoped, and the compensation paid out to the shareholders was more than generous (this was clearly a political manoeuvre aimed at 'neutralising' the small shareholders), a historic step had been taken after an unprecedented political and institutional battle. However, throughout this period there was no popular mobilisation, no mass

pressure from within the nationalisable firms. The 'popular forces', often evoked fondly by Francois Mitterrand, were not asked to be the actors in this historic event, but only the sympathetic onlookers.

### The farmers against the Left

Another significant area of struggle — but this time, where the Left has had to stand down — has been the handling of the farming community; an economically and socially key category in modern France. The last twelve months in the rural areas have illustrated not only the strength and the violence of the Right in defending its former privileges, but also a certain lack of political insight on the part of those in charge of agricultural problems in the new government as well as an under-estimation of the organisational capacities of the Right.

In short, what the Ministry of Agriculture attempted to do was to break the hold of the right wing FNSEA,<sup>7</sup> by far the most representa-

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**Many Centre-Right voters who shifted  
towards the Socialists twelve months ago  
clearly believed that Mitterrand, like Giscard  
before him, would quickly turn his back on  
his election platform.**

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tive of the farmers' unions, over the farming community. It was considered, rightly, that it was through this organisation that the Right, and in particular the 'national' Gaullist Right, had maintained its influence in the countryside over the last twenty years, and, wrongly, that administrative measures would be sufficient to cut the union down to its rightful size. Playing on the fact that the small left wing farmers' and peasants' unions — the MODEF,<sup>8</sup> the 'Paysans-Travailleurs',<sup>9</sup> and the Interpaysanne<sup>10</sup> — had been victimised by the previous regime, the Ministry decided to redistribute its union subsidies, thus financially penalising the FNSEA. Similarly, in the talks between the government and the farmers' representatives, these rival unions were invited for the first time.

These measures however were not backed by any political campaign in the countryside among the potential allies of the government: even the more egalitarian redistribution of an unprecedented government subsidy to the farmers at the annual conference late last year was carried out in a purely technocratic fashion. The outcome was that the scheme backfired: the FNSEA presented itself as an object of Socialist victimisation, proved its representivity in the farming community, and mobilised violent opposition among its supporters to the government's agricultural policy.

This has been a major political setback for the Left, and shows the danger of substituting short term administrative measures for a long term strategy of political persuasion. The Right has cashed in on the growing discontent in the farming community, and if it opts in the future for a strategy of social and political destabilisation, undoubtedly the peasants and farmers will be sent up on to the front line.

The energy-consuming task of restructuring the Right has undoubtedly been an impediment to direct and concerted political activity, and thus, as we have tried to show in the above examples, political opposition has often been mediated through professional organisations representing strata which are strongly influenced by

<sup>6</sup>See our article 'France Moves Left' in *Marxism Today*, September, 1981.

<sup>7</sup>Federation Nationale des Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles.

<sup>8</sup>Mouvement de Defense des Exploitants Familiaux (which has lately become: the COSEF) — close to the Communist Party.

<sup>9</sup>'Worker-Peasants', influenced by the ultra-left.

<sup>10</sup>Strongly influenced by the Socialist Party.

the Right. This has evidently been the case for the farmers, but other examples can be found among the police, managerial and technical staff,<sup>11</sup> and of course among employers.

For the employers' organisation, CNPF,<sup>12</sup> however, the situation is complex. Determined efforts have been made by French capital to undermine the government's social and economic policies: unwillingness to invest or create jobs despite subsidies; increased hostility towards the unions and growing recourse to gangster methods (a worker was killed in an industrial dispute in February); some out-and-out sabotage (the Paribas affair). On the other hand, the employers and their organisation are anxious not to be seen to be systematically opposing the government, which might bring about their political isolation, or worse — retaliation from the government (credit squeeze, or some form of price control). Clearly the employers are hoping for the convergence of discontent in the traditional strata won over to conservative ideas — with the medium term prospect of either a right wing takeover, or, more likely, a radical watering down of government policies.

### The Left in Government: The Price of Disunity

The 'honeymoon' period from June until December of last year is now very much a thing of the past. The local election results have given new confidence, and attractive propaganda arguments to the right wing parties. Surely, with mounting political opposition in the rural areas, social unrest, and discontent in the factories, it is about time the government and the major Left parties reacted? The situation is far from being dramatic — but it does call for resolute political action. Four brief, and therefore perhaps over-simplified observations should help to explain why this reaction is so slow in coming.

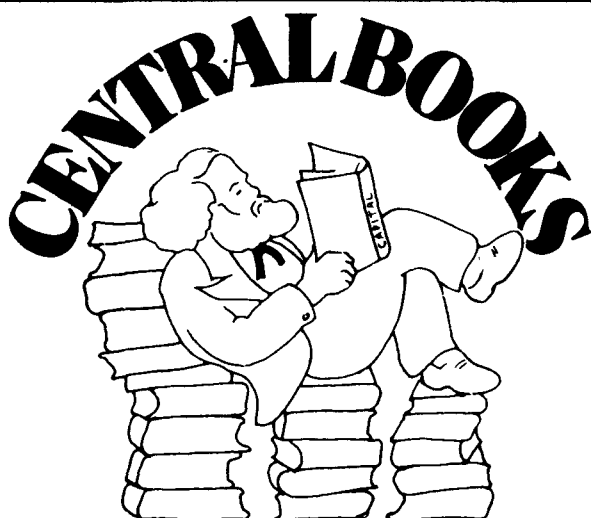
Firstly, the 'dynamics of left unity' which was destroyed by the

break-down of the discussions between Socialists and Communists in September 1977 and the subsequent open hostility which lasted until the presidential elections has never been recovered. The opium of official party and government statements should not lull the outside observer into believing that all is now well on the Left. No attempt has been made, on a leadership level, to engage in a thorough-going discussion on the unresolved strategic and tactical divergences of the 1977-1981 period. As a result, 'left unity' is restricted to the governmental and parliamentary spheres — where it is scrupulously respected — but there are no contacts whatsoever between rank and file organisations of the main parties; or rather, when they do exist, they are officially frowned upon.

Secondly, this muted disunity between the parties of the Left becomes open and sometimes violent polemics when displaced into the field of trade union activity. The relatively acute polarisation of trade union attitudes, particularly since the Polish crisis in mid-December, may be interpreted as the expression of the divisions which cannot be given an airing in the political sphere.

On the right of the union movement three minority confederations, FO,<sup>13</sup> and CGC and the CFTC,<sup>14</sup> have formed a so-called 'reformist front' whose main objectives would seem to be the ejection of the Communist ministers from the government, and the development of a systematic opposition to the more radical government proposals for democratising industry. FO has developed a MacCarthyite campaign against 'communist infiltration' in the state apparatus.

The CFDT leadership has come out clearly in favour of a 'social contract' type orientation, reproducing the conservative economic analyses of the 'moderate' members of the government, and opposing the CGT's 'maximalist' positions, on the 39-hour with no cut in

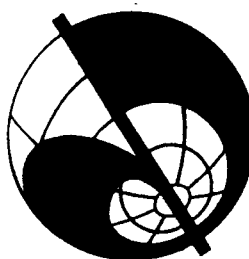


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pay for example. During the Polish crisis it was again the CFDT which occupied the positions which the right wing of the Socialist Party could not defend: the crisis rapidly became a means of obtaining ammunition for the purely French affair of isolating the Communists. Early this year, the CFDT went on to join those on the Right who were protesting against the contract for the provision of Soviet gas to France, criticising Mitterrand and the government for their ambivalent attitudes towards the Soviet Union.

The CGT has taken a significantly different stand to that of its major rival, the CFDT, promoting, whenever possible, industrial action in order to overcome resistance from the employers to the government's economic strategy, and also 'push' the government in the right direction. The CGT may be considered to be occupying a sort of Left vigilante position which the Communist Party, for the reasons we have already mentioned, cannot openly defend. While supporting the general orientation of government policy, the CGT has been critical of the 'moderation' of certain measures: the rise in the minimum wage have been considered too small; the increase in social security contributions and indirect taxes were described as political mistakes. The CGT however, has been weakened by its *rapprochement* to the Communist Party, whose defeat it 'shared' in 1981. The Polish crisis revealed divisions within the CGT, even at leadership level.

This leads us on, *thirdly*, to the historical decline of the French Communist Party. Whatever explanation is given for this decline it has had a detrimental effect on the Left in general. According to the party leadership, and to the 24th Congress resolution recently adopted in St Ouen, the drop in Communist electoral support not only in May 1981, but throughout the sixties and seventies, was due to an over-reliance on two 'external' models: the constant implicit reference to Soviet socialism prevented the Party from defining a coherent alternative to monopoly capitalism in French conditions; and, secondly, the *form* of left unity inherited from the Popular Front experience, and which inspired the Common Programme (1972-1977) was detrimental to the Communists in that it tended to hide the fundamental differences between revolutionary and reformist currents on the Left. Critical party members have pointed out

### **Right wing leaders used every conceivable argument to show that the radical Marxist Left had taken over, and was planning the wholesale collectivisation of the French economy.**

that the Party's isolation on the Left dates from the 1977/1978 period and that the turnabout in party attitudes on key questions such as the analysis of the socialist countries and the alliance between manual and intellectual workers cannot be written off as secondary issues in any honest analysis of that isolation. In any case, the Polish crisis and the position adopted by the leadership of the PCF, which refused both to condemn the military takeover and to demand the release of the imprisoned trade unionists, have done nothing to reverse the process (as the local election results demonstrate). With the decline of the Communist Party, the French Left is being deprived of powerful arms in the present struggle against right wing opposition: the Communist Party represents a potential of militant working class support for the government, and its isolation will create a dangerous gap between the government and the working class; a decline in the electoral, and more generally political influence of the Communists also represents an imbalance on the Left in favour of more moderate, 'social democrat' solutions; and



*Delors*

lastly, the Communist Party is the only political force on the left capable of mobilising a popular reaction against the present right wing onslaught.

### **Conclusion**

This brings us, *fourthly*, to a final observation by way of a conclusion. After the local election setback, and with mounting right wing opposition throughout the country, the Left government in France is at the crossroads. Until now, the Socialist Party has been unable, and unwilling, to mobilise support for the government which it dominates: it has little or no organisational strength in industry and, moreover, everything would seem to indicate that its preference goes to technocratically-decided economic and social change rather than mass pressure. The fear of alienating precious Centre-Left, middle strata support is undoubtedly a determining factor in this respect. The PCF is now a junior partner in the Left: politically weakened, it is clearly unwilling to throw all its strength behind government policies decided by Francois Mitterrand or Pierre Mauroy.

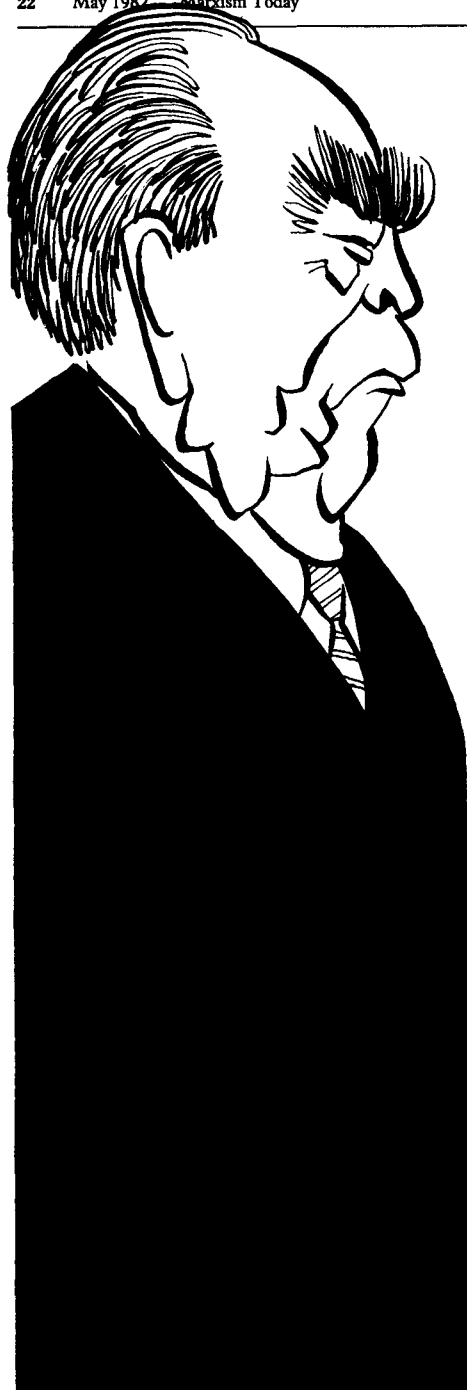
However, without effective and coordinated mobilisation of popular support there are two inherent dangers in the present situation. Firstly, the institutional (parliamentary) struggle for economic and social change may become totally disconnected from if not contradictory to, the class battles being waged in industry (mainly by the CGT), with the risk that both may be lost in the long term. Secondly, when the government does finally call on popular mobilisation — as it inevitably will have to do, given present trends, if it wishes to remain on its radical trajectory — may not the divisive habits of the past (and present) prevent that support from being forthcoming? □

<sup>11</sup>The Confederation Generale des Cadres (CGC) which represents these categories has been waging a violent campaign against the government's fiscal policies, and also against plans to extend workers' democratic control over decision-making in industry.

<sup>12</sup>Conseil National du Patronat Francais, fraternal organisation of the CBI.

<sup>13</sup>Force Ouvriere: CIA-financed breakaway from the CGT at the beginning of the Cold War. The general secretary Andre Bergeron, is also a member of the Socialist Party.

<sup>14</sup>Confederation Francaise des Travailleurs Chretiens: Catholic union which gave birth to the CFDT in 1964. Now, very much a minority confederation.



Michael Pentz

## Opportunity or Opportunism?

**Reagan and Brezhnev have come  
up with new peace proposals.  
But do they mean anything.**

In the January 1982 issue of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* there is a short article by Professor Carl G Jacobsen, who is professor and director of Soviet Studies at the University of Miami.

Jacobsen noted that in 'the gigantic peace demonstrations recently witnessed in Western Europe' the 'primary focus' has been on US cruise missile and Pershing II deployment plans rather than on the Soviet SS20 (though this is also attacked). This emphasis is apparently puzzling to many Americans. Jacobsen goes on to explain this in the following terms:

"The crux of the matter is that planned Cruise and Pershing deployments are seen to constitute a provocative "Cuba in reverse."

Cruise missiles and Pershing IIs stationed in Western Europe would threaten Moscow. Their planned deployment is therefore seen as reneging on an "understanding" that goes back to 1962-1963. This interpretation suggests that if it was legitimate for Washington to demand Soviet withdrawal in 1962, then it would be equally legitimate for Moscow to take a similar stand in 1983, when Cruise missiles and the Pershings are scheduled to appear in Europe.'

Why has the Soviet Union, since 1977-8, been replacing its 1959-vintage SS4 missiles, and probably also some of its 1961-vintage SS5s, by the new SS20s?

The SS4 is a massive missile (73 feet long, 5 feet in diameter) carrying a single 1 mega-

ton warhead. It has a range of about 2000km. It is extremely inaccurate (it has a 50/50 chance of landing within 1½ miles of its target). It is propelled by a non-storable liquid fuel and takes several hours to prepare for launch. This makes it very vulnerable to attack. It is clearly a 'counter-city', or 'deterrent' weapon, and SS4s have been aimed at cities in Western Europe including Britain for practically 20 years.

The SS5 is even more massive than the SS4 (80 feet long, 8 feet in diameter) and is only slightly less obsolete than the SS4; first deployed in 1961 it is also liquid fuelled, but the liquid is storable. It has about double the range of SS4 and also carries a single 1 megaton warhead. It is a counter-city weapon,

like the SS4, with an accuracy of about 1.2 km compared with 2.4 km for the SS4.

## SS20

The SS20 (first deployed in 1977) is a modern, solid-fuelled (so quickly launchable) missile, carrying three independently targetable warheads each of 150 kilotons yield and with an accuracy comparable with that of the best US missiles (about 400 metres).

Does the accuracy of SS20 make it an effective 'counterforce' weapon? No it does not. The 'hard-target kill probability' of SS20 is between 30% and 60% depending on the 'hardness' of the target. A weapon has a significant counterforce capacity only if the kill probability is well over 90% — and for that an accuracy of a few tens of metres is needed. So what's the point of SS20 and why is there such a fuss about it?

The vital difference between SS20 and the obsolete SS4s and SS5s it is replacing is that

## Reagan's 'Zero Option' offer was obviously ridiculous

SS20 is mobile — it is launched from a mobile carrier. This makes it less vulnerable to attack, whereas the SS4 (and SS5) missiles were becoming more and more vulnerable to attack by US forward-based nuclear forces.

As Professor Jacobsen explains, the SS20s merely modernise a long existent threat to Western European cities:

'The point of the matter is, in other words, that SS20s merely confirm and guarantee long established Soviet strike potentials against America's allies. The Cruise and Pershing II missiles, however, threaten not just reciprocal destruction of Soviet allies; they threaten the Soviet heartland instead, just as effectively as do inter-continental range missiles based on US soil. For there to be a true analogy Moscow would have to deploy the SS20s in Cuba. The

fact that Washington apparently feels that Moscow will be forced to swallow Cruise and Pershing missiles in NATO Europe, when it is quite clear that the United States would not tolerate SS20s outside Havana, furthermore suggests that US policymakers are far more confident about balance of power realities than their rhetoric would suggest.'

It is perhaps ironic that this commentary from a quite unbiased American source pre-dates by three months the hue and cry in the media (with the BBC well to the fore, as usual) about the 'Cuba card peeping from Mr. Brezhnev's sleeve' (*Guardian* 17 March 1982). The technique used by the media (and by Mrs Thatcher) both to pooh-pooh the Brezhnev proposals and to promote Reagan's 'Zero-Option' as an 'historic proposal' is basically one of falsifying the data.

## Brezhnev proposals

First, let's take a look at what Brezhnev actually proposed. In a speech on 3 February, he referred to earlier Soviet calls for a moratorium on further deployment of missiles in Europe and for an agreement that would reduce the current stocks of both sides by 'hundreds', and he went on to say 'It would be possible, for instance, to cut by 1990 the present number of medium-range nuclear armaments by each side to one-third or even less'. He suggested that this could be achieved if both sides agreed now to a step-by-step reduction that would lead to a 'cut in arsenals of both in the next few years by approximately one third — and then going further ahead'.

On 16 March, Brezhnev announced a unilateral freeze on the deployment of SS20s in Europe and called on NATO not to deploy Cruise and Pershing II missiles in five Western European countries. Then followed the 'warning' passage that was avidly seized upon by the media to distract attention from the substance of Brezhnev's positive proposals: 'We regard it as our duty to make perfectly clear that if the United States and its NATO allies, in defiance of the will of the nations for peace, were to carry out their plan to deploy in Europe hundreds of new American missiles, capable of striking targets on the territory of the Soviet Union, a different strategic situation would arise in the world. There would arise an additional threat to our country and its allies from the United States. This would compel us to take retaliatory steps that would put the other side, including the United States, its own territory, in an analogous position.'

The response from Mrs Thatcher was to assert that the Soviet freeze on intermediate range weapons should be dismissed because 'it freezes the total superiority of the Soviet

Union in these particular theatre nuclear weapons' (House of Commons, 16 February). She was, as usual merely echoing an earlier statement by Reagan — to the effect that a freeze on current nuclear missile deployment in Europe would leave the Russians with 'a 300 to nil advantage'.

Like all good lies, these are based on the truth, which is that NATO (excluding France) does indeed have no *land-based* intermediate range missiles, provided that one defines 'intermediate range' in such a way as to exclude the Pershing IA missiles, ie above 750 km.

It so happens that NATO chose not to develop *this particular type* of theatre nuclear weapon, relying instead upon a combination of submarine-launched missiles (the four British Polaris submarines and the five US Poseidon submarines assigned to the European theatre) with forward-based nuclear strike aircraft and shorter ranged ground-based missiles. If we count *all* the relevant weaponry systems on both sides, the picture looks rather different.

There was evidently a rough balance in 1980, and the figures include 480 of the new SS20 warheads. The WTO had more warheads but NATO had greater lethality.

## Reagan's 'Zero Option'

President Reagan's 'Zero Option' proposal was that the Soviet Union should withdraw *all* its intermediate range missiles (SS4 and SS5 as well as the SS20) from Europe, in return for which the USA would not deploy the 464 Cruise missiles and 108 Pershing II missiles. The proposal could hardly be taken seriously because, apart from the obvious point that it would seriously upset the existing quantitative balance, it ignores the qualitative differences between SS20 and Cruise and Pershing II.

Reagan's 'Zero Option' offer was obviously ridiculous. So why did he make it? One reason was given away by Mrs Thatcher when she said that if the Soviet Union didn't accept Reagan's offer we would have to reconsider our level of defence expenditure. In other words, they *expected* the Soviets to reject the offer, and this would then provide the excuse they want to spend even more on new nuclear weapons, like MX and Trident and the Cruise missiles and Pershing II. The other reason was, in a way, a tribute to the growing strength of the peace movement in Europe. Reagan is afraid of its political influence and hoped, by this move, to confuse and divide the campaign.

The only merit of the Reagan proposals is in the fact that they had to be made in response to pressure from the European peace movement and that this may create an

## European Theatre Nuclear Weapons 1980

|                                                         | NATO              | WTO  |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------|
| <i>Ground-launched missiles (range 750-5000 km)</i>     |                   |      |
| No. of warheads                                         | 198 <sup>2</sup>  | 992  |
| Total lethality <sup>1</sup>                            | 1725              | 3406 |
| <i>Submarine-launched missiles (range 1200-5000 km)</i> |                   |      |
| No. of warheads                                         | 1056 <sup>3</sup> | 60   |
| Total lethality                                         | 2440              | 15   |
| <i>Aircraft (range 800-5000 km)</i>                     |                   |      |
| No. of warheads                                         | 1133 <sup>4</sup> | 1926 |
| Total number of warheads                                | 2387              | 2978 |
| Total lethality <sup>1</sup>                            | 4165              | 3421 |

<sup>1</sup> Lethality is the key quantity one needs to compare if one is concerned with counterforce capacity, ie, effectiveness against 'hard' military targets.

<sup>2</sup> Includes 18 French warheads

<sup>3</sup> Includes 64 French warheads

<sup>4</sup> Includes 57 French warheads

opening through which it may be possible, by further pressure, to force genuine negotiations that could lead to deep cuts on both sides.

### The peace movement

EP Thompson, in an article in the *Guardian* (30 November 1981) advocated a positive response to the 'Zero Option' from the European peace movement and supported a proposal by David Ellsberg that Reagan's proposals should be accepted without bargaining, if and only if they are accompanied by a general freeze, binding on all powers, on the development, testing, manufacture and deployment of all further nuclear weapons at every level.

Commenting upon this in a letter (*Guardian* 8 December) Joan Ruddock (National Chairperson, CND), Bruce Kent (General Secretary, CND) and I wrote:

'We take the point that this is in harmony with both the US peace movement's campaign for a freeze and with the European movement's campaign to keep Cruise and Pershing II out of Europe and reduce (and ultimately eliminate) all nuclear weapons in Europe.

We should like to suggest an addition to the Ellsberg formula that would be in harmony with the principal aim of the British peace movement, and which would also make the

formula a bit better balanced. The formula would then have three elements:

1. The USSR withdraws SS4, SS5 and SS20 from the European theatre.

2. The USA withdraws the F111 bombers and the Poseidon submarines from the European theatre. (This is our addition. It would mean the closure of the Holy Loch base and of US Air Force F111 bases in Britain).

3. Both sides agree to a general freeze on the development, testing, manufacture and deployment of all further nuclear weapons systems at every level.'

Brezhnev's subsequent statements indicate that the Soviet Union would be willing to negotiate seriously on any formula, such as this one, which would lead to real, and reasonably balanced, reductions in nuclear weapons in Europe.

Mrs Thatcher, in her comments on the Brezhnev proposals on 16 March, stressed her 'commitment to negotiating disarmament — *but only from a position of strength*'. This well-worn phrase highlights a concern that is not alleviated by the apparently inflexible preoccupation on the Soviet side with concepts of 'strategic balance'. People who really want to see nuclear disarmament happen (as distinct from just being talked about) often warn us that the concept of 'strategic balance' can be a dangerous one. If

either side interprets 'balance' as meaning 'approximate *apparent* balance, but with a *real* safety margin in our favour', then the balance will be unstable, as one side strives to close the margin and the other to maintain it. In this way, the concept of a strategic balance can actually stimulate the arms race.

Nevertheless, Brezhnev's announcement of a freeze on the deployment of SS20s and his willingness to negotiate drastic reductions in intermediate range missiles by both sides, should be taken up much more vigorously by the peace movement and the labour movement. The response from Labour's front bench to this opportunity has been pathetic, and, with the notable exception of CND in Scotland, the peace movement has shown little enthusiasm.

There is an element of opportunism in the studied 'plague on both your houses' attitude of some people in the movement. So long as one appears to criticise symmetrically Soviet and US positions one is supposed to be 'respectable' and hopefully immune from accusations of being 'agents of the Kremlin'.

We have yet to learn how to combine *principled* criticism of Soviet policies and actions with a positive response to initiatives that correspond objectively with the goals of the peace movement. □

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**Britain has become increasingly integrated with  
Western Europe. The Left must not deny this reality  
– but rather seek new terms of co-operation.**

Bob Rowthorn

# Britain and Western Europe

The British Left has failed to develop a genuine international perspective as part of its alternative strategy. Its attitude towards other capitalist countries is often negative and backward-looking, and it has failed to appreciate the extent and irreversibility of Britain's economic integration into Western Europe, of which our entry into the Common Market is merely an expression and not the basic cause. Many on the Left still seem to believe that Britain's future is to break away from Western Europe, the USA, Japan and the rest of the capitalist world and completely reorientate ourselves towards the Third World and the socialist countries. This unrealistic vision rests on a bizarre combination of imperial nostalgia and revolutionary romanticism, and only deserves to be taken seriously because in one guise or another it influences most writings on the alternative strategy.

The present article is mainly concerned with Western Europe. It examines Britain's changing role in the world economy and identifies certain changes which have profound implications for our economic relations with other capitalist countries, especially those of the EEC. It argues that many of the present fears about competition from the EEC countries are exaggerated and that, instead of taking such a negative attitude, the Left should unreservedly accept the need for cooperation with these countries and develop its own independent views about what form this cooperation should take.

## BRITAIN'S TRADE

Two related features dominate Britain's trade over the past twenty years. The British economy has been rapidly integrated into that of Western Europe, and there has been a massive increase in the import of manufactured goods, especially from the major industrial countries which now make up the EEC. Contrary to popular belief, neither of these is an entirely new development, for in the early part of this century there were also strong economic links between Britain and Western Europe and continental firms supplied a large part of Britain's industrial requirements. However, there are certain features which are new in the situation and which lend these developments a new significance and a more enduring character. In particular, there is the spread of multinational companies, which hardly existed before the First World War but now occupy an increasingly dominant position in the British economy and in Britain's economic relations with the outside world.

The evolution of Britain's relations with Western Europe can be gauged from Table 1 which shows the share of various regions in our imports and exports. In 1913 Western Europe as a whole accounted for 37.4% of all UK imports and the present EEC countries alone for 29.4%. Particularly important were manufactured imports from France and Germany, which between them provided well over a tenth of all manufactured goods used in Britain — a figure which has probably not been surpassed even today. Moreover, such imports were rising rapidly and there were fears, just as there are today, about the superior competitive power of continental industry. On

the export side, Western Europe was also extremely important and purchased 36.9% of all Britain's exports, of which 30.3% went to the present EEC countries and the rest to Scandinavia and elsewhere. However, a major part of these exports consisted of coal and other primary products, and in manufacturing trade Britain had a large deficit with Western Europe. With the rest of the world, however, the situation was quite different, and to those other countries Britain sold manufactured goods in return for food and primary products.

## The fall and rise of Western Europe

The year 1913 marks a turning point in Britain's relations with Western Europe. Two world wars and the interwar crisis eroded economic links with the continent, especially with the present EEC countries, and drove Britain into increasing reliance on her formal and informal empire in the Third World and the white dominions (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa), where protection and other measures were used to keep out Britain's competitors and to guarantee a cheap supply of primary products in return for British exports of manufactured goods. In Britain itself tariffs, and later import controls, were used to exclude manufactured imports, and British industry eventually obtained an almost complete monopoly of the home market (see Table 2). This reliance on protection and the Empire reached a peak under the post-war Attlee government, whose strategy for economic recovery was based on a rigid exclusion from Britain of all but the most vital of imported manufactures and on a vigorous export drive to finance the import of primary products from the Third World and the white dominions. By the late 1940s such primary producers accounted for some two-thirds of all Britain's external trade (as compared to 40% in 1913) whilst at home British industry supplied 95% of all the manufactured goods used.

During the 1950s this situation began to change slowly as the empire crumbled and protection was relaxed; but it was only at the end of the decade — when Europe had fully recovered from the effects of the war and trade was liberalised in Western Europe — that a real shift occurred. And when it did occur the shift was dramatic. Trade with Western Europe mushroomed, especially with the EEC and especially in manufactures, and the relative importance of trade with the former empire plummeted. By 1980 imports had captured 25% of the British market for manufactured goods, as compared to 6-7% in the late fifties, whilst exports had risen from 16 to 26% of output. The EEC countries alone now provide about one sixth of all manufactured goods consumed in Britain and buy about one eighth of our manufacturing output. Western Europe now accounts for nearly three-fifths of all Britain's foreign trade; the share of the white dominions has fallen to under 6% and that of the Third World to around one fifth.

## Effects of the EEC

Many of the changes just described are often blamed on Britain's

entry into the Common Market, but this is only partly true. As we have seen, the reliance of Britain on imports from Western Europe has a long history, and the rapid growth of imports from the EEC predates Britain's entry by more than a decade. In the agricultural sphere, of course, the EEC is a highly protectionist body and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has almost certainly raised imports from the EEC at the expense of the Commonwealth. But despite all the hysteria this policy generates, agricultural products now form a fairly small part of Britain's total import bill, and the basic reorientation of our economy towards EEC countries is mainly concerned with industrial products, the trade in which was not directly affected very much by our entry. There is, of course, always the argument that, had Britain not been a member of the EEC, tariffs or direct controls might have been used (and still could be used) to restrict imports from France, Germany and other EEC countries. However, this is a purely hypothetical argument about what alternative policies could have been followed if Britain had stayed out of the EEC or could still be followed if we left and, although possibly correct, it does not alter the fact that Britain's

### It is an illusion to believe that trade with other areas can eliminate our interdependence with the EEC.

trade was shifting rapidly towards the EEC before we joined and that membership has not directly influenced this process to any great extent.

The reorientation of Britain's trade and the growth of manufactured imports is sometimes also ascribed to multinational enterprises, but again this is only partly true. Multinationals have certainly taken on a new significance in recent years, especially in Western Europe where there is now an extensive international division of labour organised within these corporations, and much of Britain's manufacturing trade now takes the form of imports and exports between different parts of the same company. This is well-known and needs no demonstration here.<sup>1</sup> But multinationals are not the basic cause of growing interdependence between the countries of Western Europe or between Britain and the EEC. Both before the First World War and again in the 1960s, when multinationals were still relatively unimportant in manufacturing industry, there was already an extensive trade between Britain and Western Europe and manufactured imports from the continent were growing rapidly. However, the spread of multinationals in recent years may have influenced the pace of integration and is certainly changing its form — imports and exports now increasingly take place within the same giant corporation and are often determined by such corporations in accordance with some continental, or even global strategy for production. This change has major political implications and any attempt to control or influence Britain's role in the international division of labour would involve tackling the multinationals, both British and foreign owned.

#### Other areas

There is some evidence that Britain's integration with Western Europe may be slowing down under the impact of the present economic crisis which has affected trade between all European countries. But this is almost certainly a temporary phenomenon and the longer-run trend is towards greater integration. However, alongside this continued integration with Western Europe there are also

<sup>1</sup>For a good discussion of the role of multinationals in the British economy see Ben Fine, *Multinational Corporations, the British Economy and the Alternative Economic Strategy*, Birkbeck College, London, 1982.

**Table 1. UK visible trade by region, 1913-80**

| Region <sup>2</sup>             | Percentage shares <sup>1</sup> |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                                 | 1913                           | '29  | '38  | '48  | '58  | '65  | '73  | '79  | '80  |
| EEC                             | 29.8                           | 27.9 | 21.1 | 15.6 | 19.8 | 25.0 | 32.8 | 42.4 | 41.2 |
| Other Western Europe            | 7.3                            | 7.9  | 8.8  | 10.4 | 10.3 | 13.9 | 17.6 | 16.6 | 16.1 |
| USA                             | 13.3                           | 11.8 | 9.1  | 6.6  | 9.0  | 11.1 | 11.1 | 9.9  | 10.5 |
| Japan                           | 1.4                            | 1.2  | 0.7  | 0.2  | 0.7  | 1.2  | 2.5  | 2.3  | 2.3  |
| White dominions                 | 13.8                           | 16.1 | 23.0 | 24.5 | 21.1 | 18.3 | 10.9 | 5.9  | 5.8  |
| Oil exporters (OPEC)            | 2.4                            | 3.4  | 3.7  | 7.1  | 10.0 | 7.6  | 7.9  | 7.9  | 9.2  |
| Newly industrializing countries | 3.5                            | 3.0  | 2.7  | 3.5  | 2.8  | 3.0  | 3.9  | 3.8  | 4.0  |
| Other less developed countries  | 20.7                           | 24.2 | 23.8 | 29.6 | 22.7 | 16.2 | 9.8  | 8.4  | 8.1  |
| Socialist countries             | 7.8                            | 4.8  | 7.0  | 2.7  | 3.2  | 3.6  | 3.5  | 3.0  | 2.7  |

<sup>1</sup>Average of region's share in UK exports and UK imports.

<sup>2</sup>Definitions: EEC = France, Benelux, W. Germany, Italy, Ireland, Denmark. White Dominions = Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa. Newly Industrializing = Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Philippines, Mexico, Brazil. Centrally planned economies = E. Europe, Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, N. Korea, Mongolia.

Source: UK Overseas Trade Statistics, various years

newer forces linking Britain more closely once again to the Third World, whose share in our trade is no longer falling and may even rise over the coming decade. On the import side, Britain is buying more manufactured goods from such newly industrialising countries (NICs) as Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. And, on the export side, the higher price of oil has created new markets in the OPEC countries which British firms have exploited quite effectively, with the result that exports to this region have risen extremely fast — in the last four months of 1981 nearly 12% of Britain's exports went to OPEC as compared to only 6% in 1973. The recent glut of oil may have interrupted this growth for the time being, but the underlying trend is surely upwards. Thus, the longer-run prospect is one of continued integration with Western Europe, especially with the EEC countries, together with a significant growth in Britain's trade with the Third World.

Two other aspects of Britain's trade are worth mentioning. The first is the appearance of Japan as a supplier of manufactured goods to Britain during the past twenty years. Japan's share of our total imports is still fairly small — under 4% — but many of the goods imported from such Asian countries as Taiwan and South Korea are in fact produced by Japanese multinationals operating in these countries and, if such imports are included, the overall share of Japanese firms is around 5%. This figure is likely to rise in the future as imports from Japan itself and from the rest of Asia increase. By contrast our trade with the socialist countries is stagnating. Unlike other capitalist countries, such as France or Germany, which now do

**Table 2. Share of imports in the UK market (per cent) for manufactures**

| 1899 | 1913 | '29  | '37  | '50 | '58 | '63 | '73  | '80  |
|------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|
| 21.8 | 24.2 | 20.9 | 11.3 | 4.7 | 6.5 | 9.7 | 17.2 | 25.4 |

Source: Figures for '73 and '80 from the *Monthly Digest of Statistics*. Earlier figures estimated from data contained in the *Annual Abstract of Statistics* and A. Maizels, *Industrial Growth and World Trade*, Cambridge 1963.

**Table 3. UK manufacturing and the world market in 1980**

| Region            | Imports (%)<br>UK demand | Exports (%)<br>UK production |
|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| EEC               | 11.8                     | 9.7                          |
| Rest of W. Europe | 4.6                      | 4.5                          |
| USA               | 3.6                      | 2.4                          |
| Other             | 5.4                      | 9.5                          |
| Total             | 25.4                     | 26.1                         |

Source: *Monthly Digest of Statistics*, UK overseas trade statistics

a thriving business with the socialist countries, Britain has failed to develop any significant trade in this direction. The share of all the socialist countries combined — Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, China and the rest — in British imports and exports is less than 3%, and this share is actually falling. France now exports nearly twice as much as Britain to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and Germany nearly four times as much. There is obviously considerable scope for expansion here.

Despite all the actual and potential changes in these other directions — trade with the Third World and Japan and, hopefully, with the socialist countries — one basic fact is clear. Britain's links with Western Europe, and in particular with the EEC countries, are now, and will remain for the indefinite future, the central feature of our existence as a trading nation. Any attempt to solve Britain's economic problems without confronting this fact is doomed to failure. It is an illusion to believe that trade with these other areas can eliminate, or even significantly reduce, our interdependence with Western Europe or even with the countries of the EEC.

### IMPORT CONTROLS AND THE ROLE OF MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

The massive growth of manufactured imports in recent years has aroused a fear in the labour movement that British industry is facing extinction, and there have been widespread demands for protection against foreign competition. Various culprits have been identified. The TUC blames Japan and the newly industrialising countries of the Third World, against which it takes a fairly harsh line; whilst the Labour Party blames imports from Western Europe and demands withdrawal from the Common Market. There is clearly substance in these fears about the future of manufacturing industry in Britain, for British industry is facing stiff competition from foreign firms and multinational companies are shifting the balance of their manufacturing activities overseas. In certain cases protection may be justified. There is also the balance of payments to consider. Economic expansion, as envisaged under the alternative economic strategy would also create a huge demand for foreign manufactured goods and controls might be required to keep the expansion of such imports in line with what Britain can afford. Finally, import controls would provide a powerful weapon against the multinationals and would allow a left wing government to alter the geographical pattern and character of Britain's manufacturing imports, thereby imposing new social and political priorities on our trade with other countries.

#### A wrong argument

The above arguments establish a strong case for import controls and there is widespread, if not universal, agreement that such controls would be required as part of an alternative economic strategy. However, despite this agreement on the general need for control, there is no agreement about what import controls would actually mean in practice and, in particular, what trade policy would be required under the alternative economic strategy to ensure that Britain 'paid her way in the world'. Many people start from the assumption that Britain is a mainly industrial nation which requires a large surplus on her manufacturing trade to finance the import of food, raw materials and other primary products without which she cannot survive. They argue that, because of rising manufactured imports from other advanced capitalist countries, Britain can no longer earn the required surplus and is facing bankruptcy. They point out that Britain now has a large deficit in manufacturing trade with the EEC, Japan and certain other countries, and they claim that import controls should be used to eliminate or severely reduce this deficit and thereby release the funds required to purchase essential primary products. This entire line of argument is, in my opinion,

mistaken and, if taken literally, could lead to an extremely chauvinistic and anti-social trade policy. The idea that we need a large surplus in manufacturing trade to pay for the import of primary products is based on an outdated and blinkered view of Britain's role in the world economy. So too is the idea that Britain cannot afford a deficit with the EEC or Japan. These ideas derive from an exaggerated view about the importance of manufacturing in Britain's balance of payments, and they ignore or underestimate what has occurred in other sectors of the economy, such as agriculture and services, over the past decade.

As everyone knows, Britain is now self-sufficient in energy as a result of North Sea oil, and although we still import oil from the Middle East and elsewhere, this is counterbalanced by the export of other grades of oil to Western Europe and the USA. Moreover, with a vigorous programme of conservation, together with the development of alternative sources of energy — such as renewables or coal (of which there are huge deposits in this country) — Britain could probably remain self-sufficient in energy for the indefinite future, long after North Sea oil runs out. All this is well known.

**Britain is now well on the way to self-sufficiency in foodstuffs, in the sense that exports in this sector may soon be sufficient to cover the cost of imports.**



#### Food and raw materials

Less well known is the fact that Britain is now well on the way to self-sufficiency in foodstuffs, in the sense that exports in this sector may soon be sufficient to cover the cost of imports. Over the past twenty years the volume of food, drink and tobacco imported has hardly changed, whilst exports have risen strongly, and if present trends continue Britain's deficit on this item will disappear by the early 1990s. Moreover, the volume of raw materials imported has hardly changed over the past twenty years and, although Britain is

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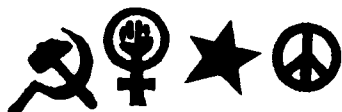
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likely to remain in deficit on this item for the indefinite future, the amount of money involved is not very large. Raw materials now account for only 6% of Britain's total expenditure on imported goods and services, and their cost is equivalent to a mere 2% of our national income. Even if the real price of these materials were to double or treble over the next decade, as that of oil has over the past decade — which seems unlikely — the net cost of such imports would still be relatively small. Thus, taking primary products as a whole — food, materials and fuel — Britain's deficit is no longer very large and is diminishing in comparison with total export earnings and total output. Even this small deficit in primary products does not require a surplus of manufacturing trade to finance it. Britain has a large and growing surplus on services which is now sufficient to pay for all our net imports of food, materials and the like.

### Services

All major service items in the balance of payments, other than military expenditure overseas, are now in surplus and their *net* contribution of foreign exchange was around £5,000 million in 1980 (see Table 4). This figure does not include property income in the form of interest, profits and dividends which are classified separately. Services are a mixed bag and range from banking and commercial activities in the City of London to shipping, aviation and tourism, together with a variety of smaller items which are grouped under the heading 'other services' — such as fees from consultancy or construction work overseas. Some of these items are rather disreputable and their continuation would be undesirable under a Left government; but the vast bulk of service activities are perfectly respectable and should be encouraged, including many of those performed by the City of London. Services have traditionally aroused hostility or contempt in left wing circles in the mistaken

**Table 4. UK balance of payments in 1980**  
(current account) in £ million

| Visible Trade                        | Credit      | Debit  | Net    |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|--------|--------|
| Food, beverages and tobacco          | 3,241       | 5,619  | -2,378 |
| Basic materials                      | 1,467       | 3,413  | -1,946 |
| Fuels                                | 6,418       | 6,589  | -171   |
| Manufactures                         | 34,879      | 29,385 | +5,494 |
| Unclassified                         | 1,384       | 1,205  | +179   |
| Total                                | 47,389      | 46,211 | +1,178 |
| <b>Services</b>                      |             |        |        |
| General government                   | 84          | 176    | -92    |
| Sea transport                        | 3,816       | 3,681  | +135   |
| Civil aviation                       | 2,210       | 1,815  | +395   |
| Travel                               | 2,965       | 2,757  | +208   |
| City of London                       | 1,595 (net) | -      | +1,595 |
| Other services                       | 4,826       | 2,180  | +2,746 |
| Total                                | 15,496      | 10,609 | +4,887 |
| <b>Property Income and Transfers</b> |             |        |        |
| Interest, profit and dividends       | 8,204       | 8,242  | -38    |
| Transfers <sup>1</sup>               | 793         | 2,052  | -1,259 |
| Total                                | 8,997       | 10,294 | -1,297 |
| <b>Military and EEC</b>              |             |        |        |
| Military                             | 201         | 1,050  | -849   |
| EEC                                  | 1,070       | 1,783  | -713   |
| Total                                | 1,271       | 2,833  | -1,562 |
| Grand total                          | 73,153      | 69,947 | +3,206 |

<sup>1</sup> Aid, emigrants remittances etc

belief that most of them are unproductive or, worse still, parasitical. Under the impact of 'de-industrialisation' this blinkered attitude is beginning to change, for it is now realised that services can provide employment to replace jobs lost in industry. However, the contribution of services to the balance of payments is still not

## Britain's imports of manufactured goods are now too low in relation to exports and not too high

appreciated and the Left still exaggerates the importance of manufacturing trade out of all proportion.

Table 4 shows the major items in Britain's balance of payments in 1980, the last year for which detailed figures are available. This table reveals a number of things. As already mentioned, Britain's earnings from economic services (ie, excluding military expenditure overseas and the like) are now sufficient to finance all our net imports of primary products — food, raw materials etc — without any contribution at all from manufacturing exports. This marks a radical change from twenty or even ten years ago, when Britain really did need a large surplus on manufacturing trade to survive. As a result of rising service income and growing self-sufficiency in primary products, Britain now has an overall balance of payments surplus with the outside world.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, this surplus is now so large that, even with present export earnings, Britain could afford to increase her import of foreign manufactured goods by 10% or more without going into the red. The fact is that Britain's imports of manufactured goods are now too low in relation to exports and not too high, as many people seem to believe. Naturally, Britain cannot afford to import unlimited quantities of manufactured goods from abroad, and under a Left government controls might be required to prevent imports getting totally out of hand during economic expansion. But even so, provided export earnings held up, manufactured imports could be a great deal higher than they are now.

### Keeping the deficit

This brings me to the thorny question of trade with the Common Market and Japan. As I have already mentioned, Britain imports more manufactured goods from these countries than she exports, and the result is a substantial deficit in manufacturing trade. It is widely argued that import controls should be used to eliminate this deficit and establish a rough balance in manufacturing trade with the EEC and Japan. This argument is, in my view, mistaken. Britain participates in a global division of labour and her economic relations with any single country or group of countries cannot be judged in isolation. Whilst it is true that Britain has a large deficit in manufacturing trade with certain capitalist countries, she has an even larger surplus with the rest of the world, especially with the OPEC countries which spend in Britain much of the money they earn by selling oil to the EEC and Japan. So long as Britain has a large surplus with the rest of the world, Britain can afford to run a deficit with the EEC and Japan. Indeed, the point can be put more strongly. It is Britain's *duty* to run such a deficit, for this is one of the most effective ways of ensuring that the money we receive from the OPEC countries is recycled back into the world economy.

Take the case of Japan. Unlike Britain, Japan has virtually no indigenous supplies of energy and half of the country's export earnings are spent on oil. Most of the money earned by exporting manufacturing goods to Britain is used to buy oil from the OPEC

<sup>2</sup>This is true not just for 1980, the year shown in Table 4, but also for 1981 and, it is predicted, 1982.

countries. The same money is used by OPEC to buy manufactured goods from Britain, and the result is a triangular trade in which money circulates from Britain to Japan, Japan to OPEC and then back to Britain again. This all shows up in official trade statistics. In the last four months of 1981 Britain had a trade surplus of £904 million with the OPEC countries, as compared to a deficit of only £508 million with Japan.

The use of import controls to eliminate our deficit with the EEC or Japan, whilst continuing to maintain a large surplus with OPEC and the Third World, would be both pointless and chauvinistic. Of course, Britain cannot afford to import an unlimited amount of manufactured goods, but current imports are well within the range of what we can afford. Indeed, our surplus with OPEC and the rest of the Third World could finance an even larger deficit with the EEC or Japan than we have at present, and we could afford to increase our imports from these countries by a considerable amount.

This article has stressed the importance of Britain's economic relations with Western Europe, especially with the EEC countries, and has argued that these relations are less harmful to Britain than is

**Table 5. UK balance of trade in manufactures in 1980, by region, £ million**

| Region            | UK exports <sup>1</sup> | UK imports <sup>1</sup> | Balance <sup>2</sup> |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| EEC               | 13,759                  | 15,478                  | -1,719               |
| Japan             | 482                     | 1,671                   | -1,189               |
| Rest of the world | 22,748                  | 16,055                  | +6,693               |
| Total             | 36,989                  | 33,204                  | +3,785               |

Source: UK Overseas Trade Statistics

<sup>1</sup>Exports are measured 'f.o.b.' and imports 'c.i.f.'

<sup>2</sup>Because of the way imports and exports are measured, the regional balances overestimate Britain's deficit with Japan and the EEC and underestimate her surplus with the rest of the world. The overall picture is even more favourable than this table suggests.

often claimed. Because of developments in sectors such as services, oil and foodstuffs, Britain can now finance the import of a considerable quantity of manufactured goods from Western Europe, and our present deficit in manufacturing trade with the EEC is well within the range of what we can afford. In this sense, Britain's economic situation has improved over the past few years, although in most other ways it is, of course, quite desperate. A second aspect of our situation should be obvious. Because of economic integration, the countries of Western Europe, especially those of the EEC, are now in a position to inflict enormous damage on Britain, and it is of utmost importance that any future leftwing government here remains on good terms with these countries. Thirty years ago the biggest threat to socialist advance in Britain came from the United States with its then unrivalled economic power. Today it would be difficult for the US *acting alone* to sabotage British economic policies. Its trade flows with Britain are simply not large enough to give the US decisive leverage, as they account for only one-tenth of our imports and exports, and there are many alternative markets and sources of supply available. And with assets in Britain worth around £20,000 million, the US multinationals operating here are more of a hostage to fortune than an immediate political threat. Only with support from Western Europe could the US hope to bring down a leftwing government in Britain or wreck its economic programme.

Arbitrary or provocative action in the sphere of trade or finance could sour relations with Western Europe and increase the chances of certain European countries lining up with the United States against us. The bourgeoisie is, of course, always hostile to the Left and we could expect no sympathy from that quarter. But the ability of the European bourgeoisie to act against Britain would depend on the extent of its popular support, and this in turn would depend on our own actions. The unthinking and indiscriminate use of import

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*C A Nash, British Rail Lecturer at the Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds*

This study of modern road and rail based transport systems shows that planning based on purely commercial criteria is grossly inadequate, but that this in no way negates the need for economic analysis of alternative decisions or for financial monitoring and control. Using detailed applications, the book demonstrates the usefulness of applying economic analysis to problems such as fare structures and level, service planning and investment decisions. International comparisons are used to show the relationship between objectives, external circumstances, organisations and policy in the running of public transport systems.

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controls against EEC countries could cause real, if not fatal, harm to certain of their industries. The resulting distress would undoubtedly be exploited by our enemies to turn public opinion in these countries against us, and would increase the likelihood of a damaging trade war. This does not mean that import controls should be dropped from the alternative economic strategy — they still have a useful role to play as, for example, a weapon against the multinationals — but their political limitations should be clearly recognised. We should reject any idea of putting up the shutters and using controls to drive EEC or other European goods out of the British market. As I have already argued, Britain can afford to purchase even more from the EEC countries than she does at present, and the only use of controls should be to plan the future *growth* of imports from these countries. Any attempt to 'roll back' the tide of EEC imports would be suicidal and would merely lead to retaliation and to Britain's political and economic isolation.

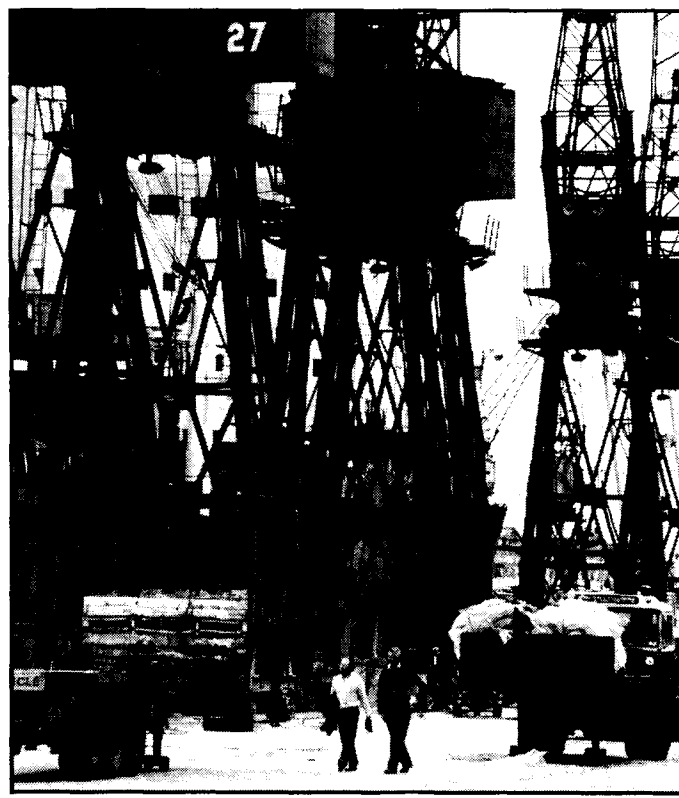
### Active cooperation

Quite apart from the purely negative argument that conflict with the countries of Western Europe should be avoided, because it might destroy us, there is also the more positive argument that active cooperation between Britain and these countries should be encouraged, because it is really needed under present day conditions. Economic integration is now a reality and the people of Western Europe now face many common problems. The crisis is now affecting the whole of Western Europe and, although unemployment is still worse here than in most other countries, it is rising everywhere. A coordinated economic expansion throughout most of Western Europe would be of immense benefit to all countries, including Britain, and would make it much easier for any left wing government here, or elsewhere, to achieve its objectives. This is now widely recognised in the labour movement but, so far, little has been done to mobilise support around such an objective.

Multinationals are another area in which cooperation is required. Such firms, many of them American owned, now occupy a decisive position in the European economy and an international response to them is required. Purely national controls on multinationals are difficult to operate and can often be evaded by relocating production and investment elsewhere. Even the complete takeover of the subsidiaries in one single country, such as Britain, may be of limited use because the parent company may retain control over vital parts of the enterprise overseas. There is clearly a need for an international struggle against multinational companies, both on a trade union level — which is widely recognised in theory, if not in practice — and at a political level. The immediate objective of such a political struggle should be an internationally agreed set of regulations governing the behaviour of multinationals in such areas as taxation, working conditions and the location of investment. But the longer term objective should be the complete takeover of such enterprises and their democratic administration on an all-European level.

### Britain and France

Reflation and the multinationals are only two of the economic issues on which cooperation between the countries of Western Europe is needed. The British Left and the labour movement are slow to accept this fact and, despite lip-service to the idea of cooperation, they still take a rather go-it-alone attitude on economic affairs. The degree of economic integration in Western Europe is increasing all the time. As it does, the number of questions on which international cooperation is required also increases. There is still some scope for independent national policies, and a determined British government could still achieve a certain amount on its own, even under present economic conditions and even without the active support of other



**So long as Britain has a large surplus with the rest of the world, Britain can afford to run a deficit with the EEC and Japan.**

European countries. But the scope for independent action is not very large and is limited by the realities of our integration with a continent which itself is in crisis. There is clearly a need for common action to solve our common problems.

With the election of Mitterrand in France, it is odd that anyone on the Left in Britain should still think of us going it alone. Individually, France or Britain is relatively weak, but acting together for socialist objectives they could transform European politics and alter the whole direction of European economic development. This has obvious implications for Britain's membership of the EEC. Traditionally, the left has seen the EEC as a body with the independent power to block socialist advance in Britain, and this is often used to justify the demand for our withdrawal. Such a view is wrong. As far as Britain is concerned, the EEC is really France and Germany. Both the EEC's policies towards us and its ability to implement them depend mainly on the attitude of these two countries. With France on our side, the EEC would lose the capacity for action against us. It would either go along with the common socialist strategy of France and Britain, or it would fall to pieces. After Mitterrand's victory, the Left's argument for immediate withdrawal from the EEC has lost some of its original force. Many aspects of the EEC are still objectionable of course and major changes are required. But these changes are now conceivable in a way that they were not even a year ago when the right wing Giscard was still in power in France. At the very least, the Left should address itself to this new situation and these new possibilities — even though the question of withdrawal must remain on the agenda. □

Note: This article will appear in a book consisting of original articles on the alternative economic strategy to be published by CSE books in the early autumn and edited by John Kelly and Tony Mannering.



The wave of fare increases above all hits the least organised and the most isolated.

Frankie Rickford

## The Hidden Victims

When the Law Lords ruled the Greater London Council's public transport subsidy illegal they stimulated a major debate on urban transport policy which despite the Government's reluctance to participate is unlikely to die while London fares remain the highest of any capital city in the world.

The economic and environmental arguments for attracting people out of cars with a cheap and reliable public transport system have been widely accepted. The London Chamber of Commerce and leader writers on the *Financial Times* have been among the many and varied voices to call for higher rates of subsidy to reduce traffic congestion, pollution, noise, road damage, accidents, fuel consumption and the waste of valuable land for car parks.

Much less attention has been paid to the fate of those Londoners unable to opt to travel by car when the fares doubled; whose experience will only be officially recorded by their absence from the tubes and buses. They are that growing chunk of the population with very low fixed incomes — the young, the unemployed, low paid and part-time workers and single parents. Their only alternative to forking out 40 pence or more for a mile's journey is to stay at home, as thousands will be forced to do.

Yet it is precisely these groups who are the biggest users of public transport all over the country, entirely dependent upon it as they are for their everyday business and much less frequent pleasure.

### Young women

According to the Department of Transport's most recently published National Travel Survey (1975-76) the most frequent bus travellers are young women aged between 16 to 20. They make

more than twice as many journeys to and from work as any other group in the population — an overall average of 2.63 a week. They also make greatest use of public transport for social, entertainment and holiday purposes — not because they go out more than their male peers but because men of the same age are more than three times as likely to have the use of a car. Young women are also the lowest earning group, so high fares may not only prevent them going to films, discos, evening classes or to visit friends but may also force them to refuse available jobs because they cannot afford to travel to work or give up jobs they already have.

The same problem confronts older 'unskilled' women whose husband and childcare responsibilities debar them from full-time jobs. I've personally met three women in London who said they had to leave jobs when the fares doubled, and I doubt if they are the only ones. If you are paid £1.50 or so an hour for 20 hours a week and have to find £2 a day for fares as well as the other expenses incurred by going out to work such as clothes, union dues and gifts for workmates, the job gets very expensive.

Nurses, office cleaners and catering workers on late night and early morning shifts also face the problem of poor or non-existent bus services at the times they need them. As a result of the fares increase and the anticipated drop in passenger traffic, London Transport has reduced all bus services especially during 'uneconomic' off peak periods. All services now start half an hour later and finish half an hour earlier and the entire night bus service may be withdrawn.

For women, waiting in the dark for a bus that does not arrive, or trying to cadge lifts, hitch-hike or walk is not only inconvenient, but dangerous. Assaults by men on nurses have now become so

frequent that the Royal College of Nursing has taken up the question in an official campaign.

Early this year a young woman was accused of 'contributory negligence' by an Ipswich judge sentencing a man who had admitted raping her after picking her up as a hitch-hiker. After a second woman hitch-hiker was raped in the same area two weeks after the trial finished it emerged that the last bus left the nearest town, Bury St Edmunds, at 5.30 in the afternoon. How many thousands of women must there be in rural areas trapped at home every single evening of their lives by such hopelessly inadequate public transport services coupled with the threat of male violence.

Not surprisingly there is a direct link between car availability and household income. (The London Borough of Bromley whose council initiated the legal action against the GLC fares policy, incidentally, has the highest number of cars per household in Greater London — three times the rate of Tower Hamlets.) But from the sex-based information available on people's travelling habits it is clear that where there is a car in the family, the man keeps the keys. About 60% of employed men in the DoT survey drove to work, compared to 36% of women. One in four women and one in ten men bussed.

### Non-job travel

But if the media, MPs and even the GLC leadership have neglected the problems of these car-less commuters, they have completely ignored the importance of non-job-related travel. Only 29% of the 62,000 bus trips in the national survey sample were made by people going to or coming from their jobs.

No passenger statistics can directly express the need of different groups in the population to travel. What appears to be an essential journey when you can afford the fare may have to be jettisoned if you cannot, and while for one person 'social' travel may mean going to a party, for another it means regular visits to a sick and aged relative who would otherwise be in an institution. Bus fares vary wildly from city to city — in Bristol for example you are well advised to carry a credit card for what in Sheffield would be a 7 pence trip — and London Transport is certain to find some sharp changes in the results of its monitoring programme after March 21.

London Transport's current monitor indicates that 57% of bus passengers and 60% of tube passengers are women, and according



to the national survey women use buses about 35% more frequently than men. Women's need to travel locally is greater because they carry the main burden of domestic and parental work. As well as shopping to feed and clothe a family, women have to visit family planning clinics, ante and post natal clinics, take their children to schools, doctors and dentists, 'keep an eye on' elderly relatives and are generally held responsible for sustaining family relationships.

The importance of public transport in carrying out these tasks is increasing week by week as small local hospitals and schools close, shopping facilities become more centralised, GPs leave their street corner surgeries for bigger health centres and families are dispersed by housing transfers. London Transport chairman Sir Peter Masefield's suggestion that hiking or walking would be a healthier alternative to expensive buses may be true for the childless in areas where the atmosphere still contains more air than exhaust fumes. But a two or three mile trek with a couple of

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### where there is a car in the family, the man keeps the keys

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miserable under fives and a stone or so of shopping in the borough of Hackney or Lewisham is not going to improve anyone's constitution.

For people dependent on supplementary benefit, public transport fare levels can make the difference between a tolerable and an intolerable existence. Two thirds of supplementary benefit claimants are single parents, predominantly women, occupying some of the worst housing in our inner cities. High fares means only absolutely essential journeys can be made, with the result that the parent and children can be literally trapped within buggy-pushing distance of home for days on end.

An added problem for many lone parents is their vulnerability, because of poverty and stress, to having their children taken into local authority care. In such circumstances, a court considering an application from the parent to take the child home will take account of the number of visits made to the residential home or foster parents' — visits which usually require a bus or underground journey. London Transport's introduction of adult fares for children after 9.00pm is a further blow to the freedom of the capital's 150,000 one parent families.

Pensioners enjoy travel concessions in most parts of the country so are not directly affected by fares increases. But as the second largest group of bus users they have to put up with the service, however bad. A free pass is little comfort when you've been waiting at a bus stop for three quarters of an hour on a winter's night for a bus that is full when it eventually arrives.

### Isolated and demoralised

I have concentrated here on the impact on some groups of working class women's lives of local public transport policies. Other groups including schoolchildren, students, and unemployed men and women have also been severely punished by the Law Lords ruling, and the Government's refusal to legislate for subsidised fares in London. And it is worth pointing out that black people are over represented in all low income groups.

The people worst hit by an attack on public transport are those most isolated and demoralised by exhaustion and poverty. To then immobilise them by pricing travel beyond their means removes them further from society, confirming their sense of powerlessness. □

Throughout the month of May Women In Entertainment have organised a festival — Women Live — which will take the form of events all over the country focussing on work which challenges the position of women working in the entertainment industry. The festival has been organised by professional performers, directors, producers, designers, writers, administrators, film-makers, musicians and technicians — all women. Here, four women look at the impact made by the women's movement and by individual women on comedy, on the rock music scene, on the theatre, and on the film industry.

**Sheila Hancock started acting in the theatre with Joan Littlewood and became widely known for her performance in the television comedy series. *The Rag Trade*. She talks to Sue Beardon about her early career as a comedienne, her attempt to break with this image, and her experiences today acting with the Royal Shakespeare Company.**

*Most people remember you from The Rag Trade but I understand you started working with Joan Littlewood?*

Yes. My career didn't start with *The Rag Trade*. It started way before that. I spent ten years in what was called weekly rep in those days. I went to RADA in the 50s at a time when the archetypal British actress was Claire Bloom, and I just didn't fit into any category. I was very tall, I was not conventionally good looking, I had a slight accent — a considerable accent — and girls like me just didn't fit in anywhere. Anyway, I did this weekly rep lark, which was fairly tatty, and you were very, very lowly paid — in fact very often you paid them for the privilege of working. I was playing every age-range — my appearance helped in that way because I could play all ages. Then I just couldn't get out of it.

*How did you get involved with Joan Littlewood?*

Well I auditioned for Joan, and we responded to one another immediately. She took me right back to all the things I'd been fighting to stop in myself. She encouraged my accent back again. She loved the way I looked. She thought I was divine, she thought I was funny, and she made me value myself. She called me her little clown.

*Do you think comedy was a way out of the dilemma of not fitting into the conventional feminine role?*

Partly, but also it was just the nature of the part that I played with her, and my nature coming out, I suppose, inasmuch as I find comedy in a lot of life, and as most of our

## An interview with SHEILA HANCOCK

work with her was improvisation and stemmed from yourself, it could be true to say that I had found comedy as a way of coping with life. In fact one of my initial remembrances of the theatrical experience was when I was in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* at primary school, and I wanted to play Snow White with a passion, but I wasn't pretty enough so they gave me Dopey. My sister sewed a bit onto the end of my red dressing gown and made me a costume which I kept tripping over. And on the first night — or afternoon — that we did it I fell over and I got a belting laugh from all the mums and dads; and Snow White didn't get a look in from then on because I fell all over the stage throughout the whole performance. I think that was my first recognition that if I got laughs, people would notice me whether I was beautiful or not.

*So Joan Littlewood liberated you in a sense?*

Very much so, yes. Joan I think is just . . . a genius. I think she's the most brilliant director I've ever worked with in my life, and I've worked with some of the good ones. She was in a class of her own. She was extraordinary because she was very possessive, with good reason, because as soon as someone got successful they got whisked away. (This was when Joan got popular — unfortunately I wasn't with her at the beginning, I wish to God I had been.) So she had a sort of possessive quality, but she was unique in making you value yourself. That was the incredible thing she did to me. In a profession where I had been nothing but a misfit struggling to be successful, Joan made me see that I could do it by being myself. That was an extraordinary revelation. Up until that point I'd been wearing flat shoes and trying to have my hair cut according to the fashion and do all those things; and Joan suddenly said, 'no, that doesn't suit you, you be what you are'.

And she said it to everybody else.

*So how did The Rag Trade follow on from that?*

That was the usual thing that happens when you do one sort of part: everybody offers you exactly the same part, and the first part that I had a big success with in the West End was *Make me an Offer* with Joan, which was based on a Wolf Mankiewicz story, playing a gawky cockney girl; so then every part I was offered was working class. And I think *The Rag Trade* came straight off from the director seeing me do that, and it was — or became — a carbon copy of it.

*How did you feel about doing that — which was, I suppose, a bit of a stereotype female?*

Well let me say that in those days I had no concept of what a female stereotype meant. It was not until I read *The Female Eunuch*. You see, I'm of a difficult generation, a generation that was caught up in the women's liberation movement at a time when I had been brought up to believe in totally different things. Suddenly these people came along and said, 'that's all wrong'. It wasn't too late for me to change, because I was in a career where it was possible, but for most women it was impossible and therefore the only reaction to that is to turn round and say, 'these people are talking bloody rubbish' — if you're going to survive. That's what a lot of women do, and I absolutely understand that.

But for me it did totally change my attitude, so after I was 30 the roles I took and my objectives in the business altered completely. When I'd just entered *The Rag Trade* I would have said, 'what do you mean?' Now I do see that of course it was a stereotype. But nevertheless it was a stereotype that existed, and still does, whether we like it or not.

*It must have been challenging — like Coronation Street — to have working class people portrayed . . .*

. . . and women, being funny . . . I think the enormous success of *The Rag Trade* was that it was mainly the women getting the laughs,

particularly little Esme Cannon, who played character called Little Lil. She'd been in the business for years and years, but suddenly she got this tremendous success . . . and Miriam with the 'everybody out' thing . . . women being funny was a startling thing at that time.

*I was going to ask you about women comedians. There's been a lot of talk about whether women can be funny? Have women got a sense of humour?*

I think women have always been good in comedy acting roles but — and it comes back to what is true of all areas for women — it's getting up the courage that makes it difficult. It takes a damn sight more courage to stand up on a stage and ask for a laugh, than it does to act out a drama where you don't have to have an audible response. If you do a comedy, or you stand up to do a comedy act, and nobody laughs, you've failed.

I think that, as in all areas, it will come — and is coming, with people like Victoria Woods — when people have got the courage to stand up and say, 'right, here I am, take it', and then be funny. Because you've got to have that arrogance. All music hall comics like Max Miller and those people have got this cheeky I-don't-care-whether-you-laugh-at-me-or-not attitude. Women very often go on saying, 'please laugh at me, please love me', and all that. You've got to not care if you're loved or not, I think, to be a comic.

*Don't you think it's very hard for women to say 'I might be fat, I might be ugly, but just laugh at me — that's fine'?*

It is. But when they do it, it works marvelously. There's a few American commediennes who are doing it now, who have been wildly successful at sending up their

own physical deficiencies, in the same way that men to a certain extent have sent them up for it, and they're doing it themselves and turning on the men. That's pretty clever actually. In life it's always a good way of stopping people laughing, if you get in first, isn't it? What I like about Victoria Woods is that she's now doing to men, something that men have been doing for a long time to women — she is taking an aggressive stance in her comedy, which I think, is a tremendous step forward.

*It's about time, isn't it?*

Yes, I'm delighted to see it. I want to see more women doing comedy because I think comedy can change attitudes possibly more than anything. I once tried — very unsuccessfully — to do a serious programme called *Now Seriously It's Sheila Hancock*, when I became conscious that I was getting this label — it wasn't that I turned against it, but I just lost interest in being Mr Digby's darling and the Bedsit Girl.

*In that series you interviewed Germaine Greer. I think you were one of the first famous showbiz personalities who came out and said, 'I'm interested in this women's liberation lark'.*

Yes, that's right . . . And we got torn apart by the press . . . The only comforting thing about that programme — and I treasure it — was that I got a load of mail. It was sent out late at night on BBC2, incidentally — they weren't taking any risks; but the response I got from women was fantastic. I got the biggest mail for that out of all the television programmes I did. But at that time the BBC were not prepared to follow it through. I'd destroyed what they had built me up as, and I've never worked for them since. So I did make little stands in my little way, but by so

doing, I did flummox them and I wasn't employed as a result.

*So was that why you moved away from that area, or were you thinking of moving away from it anyway?*

No, it wasn't really a conscious thing. I just didn't get any work there so I concentrated on the theatre. Television is very fickle: I was enormously successful at one time, I was as much known as Penelope Keith is now. But I'm sure it'll happen to Penny Keith as well. Fashions change, and if you're clever you'll keep very aware of that while you're in this big successful telly thing. You'll hedge your bets in another medium.

*Today you are acting with the Royal Shakespeare company, aren't you also doing some directing?*

Yes I am. I was attached to the Cambridge Theatre Company — mainly to learn about it — and I loved that, and it's an area I'd very much like to go in to, an area where women have a great deal to offer. It's the directors who will change things — slightly. I find that very much with the RSC, which is one of the reasons I'm with them — because I want to direct.

Directing presents a particular problem, because I think women do have a different style from men. It requires you pulling together a number of people and taking a leadership role, which women tend to do in a very different way from men, and a way in which a lot of male actors resent and find hard to understand. Another area of resistance is the technical side. I had the usual marvellous compliment from my last artistic director: he very sweetly said to me one day, 'it's been great working with you, and somebody asked me the other day what it was like working with you, and I said — "better than any man I've worked with"'. It's the usual thing. And, love'im, he meant it as a compliment, and indeed it was a compliment. But with the technical people, I haven't yet found a way of dealing with it other than by falling back on 'poor little woman — help me', or pretending I know more than I do.

It's the 'poor little women — help me' that I despise myself most for. And the way I'm going to get round that is that I'm going to learn as much as them. That's what you've got to do, because you can't faff around when you're lighting a show — it's no good being silly. You've got to know about it — and I intend to find out. I'm in the process of finding out. □



The Raincoats



Abba



## SOUND BARRIERS

Sue Steward

There was a time, say as little as ten years ago, when you could gauge what was happening on all levels of the pop music hyperstore by looking through the charts each week and reading the results of the annual readers' polls in the music press. Today both are mere indicators, giving only a partial glimpse of what is happening. But that is hardly surprising, considering that the music press is still written largely by men for men, and the polls are a response to a diet of twelve months of their opinions.

The 1982 *New Musical Express* polls serve as a good example of women's semi-visibility in the music press. The most surprising omissions occurred in two categories: as songwriters and instrumentalists. Of the forty chosen instrumentalists, one was a woman, the deserving but not fantastic bass player with Talking Heads, Tina Weymouth. No women songwriters were elected, yet several of the vocalists not only write their own material but like Chrissie Hynde of the Pretenders, provide it for others (such as Grace Jones) to use. This area has traditionally been inhabited by women, from Carole King to Kate Bush and Joan Armatrading. Moreover, in the category of women singers, the twenty successful artists are more accurate as a guide to current male sexual fantasies than as a picture of the range of women singers. The list ranges from the hard-core sado-masochism of Siouxsie (of the Banshees) through the jailbait schoolgirl innocence of Bow-WowWow's Annabella, to the superclub exotica of Diana Ross and Randy Crawford.

The music industry itself has changed little. Women are still restricted to jobs-by-gender, and it remains a howling exception for women to work in the talent-spotting, taste-making Artist & Repertoire departments. They mostly still work as secretaries or, at the public interface, in reception, sales, press and publicity.

It is as consumers and producers of music

that the greatest changes can be seen. The top-selling music magazine now is the monthly *Smash Hits* which, according to their researchers, has a circulation of 260,000, and sells to equal numbers of girls and boys.

As musicians and performers, women's involvement is not comparable with that of ten years ago. 1976 was undoubtedly a turning point — not just through punk's rejection of traditional values and options — but also because of the challenges made by the women's movement on the restrictions upon women. This certainly resulted in an increase of confidence and demystified the instruments and technology of music-making both for women and men. It even dissolved some class and racial barriers for a while.

Possibly the greatest challenges were to the lyrics, changing the staple fare of thirty years of rock, heterosexual love and its problems, for subjects previously whispered in the schoolyard or at the bus stop. Polystyrene's songs for X-Ray Spex spoke for a generation of young women oppressed by parents, teachers and propaganda about body shape, body smells, spots and periods, as well, of course, as boys. The recent compilation album, *Making Waves*, produced and recorded by women, illustrates the variety of traditional musical styles being adopted but reveals little experimentation and disappoints by regurgitating accepted forms of popular music from recent decades including, unbelievably, heavy metal, that ultra-male of all forms of rock music. It is the lyrics: songs about lesbian love, sex on the new terms, and songs with nothing to do with love or sex, which leave their mark.

But punk has left a wake of confusion and complexity which surrounds us today, and can perhaps be illustrated by one internationally popular star, Debbie Harry, and two British bands — the now-demised Slits and the Au Pairs. Debbie Harry, image on

loan from Marilyn Monroe, was number one teen idol for two years and during the TV *Swap Shop* programme in which she appeared, every caller was a girl. For those girls, she hangs beside the John Travolta and Stings on their bedroom walls. And yet she is no dumb blonde, Debbie Harry is actively involved in the music too.

The contradictions with The Slits and the Au Pairs are more subtle. The Slits were always defiantly individualistic and anti-feminist. Their combination of utter confidence on stage, their don't-give-a-fuck attitudes and undisguised *pleasure* with their music, both endeared them and alienated them from their audiences, which always included more women than men. The Au Pairs, a two men, two women band, have always been heavily committed to anti-racism and anti-sexist campaigns. Their lyrics are about sexual and political issues and with the two women playing bass and lead guitar they have upturned the rules of intra-group hierarchies. However, the Au Pairs' live performances reflect many of the complexities befalling women as rock music performers. At a recent London gig, the audience was fronted by a solid wedge of men ogling a Lesley Woods, the guitarist, clad in skin tight trousers and leaping around the stage. This could only have been avoided at a women only event but their significant choice of being a mixed band precludes that possibility. Yet the slide show of public enemies and the lyrics apart, this was a good old-fashioned rock and roll act. And rock and roll is traditionally male and macho, and its performance is a sexual act. Trying to sidestep this tradition isn't just a problem for women — on stage you are objectified, like it or not, and off-stage, women are objectified too, so the problems for women performers are compound.

Once a woman on stage begins to take pleasure in her performance, to dress up and move to music, to perform, she is no longer judged by the music alone, and the complex codes of her chosen image intervene. A public exhibition of freedom and pleasure is threatening; the pressures on her to conform to standards of being a 'sex object' increase — Lesley Woods was voted as a singer, not a guitarist.

This pleasure versus puritanism dilemma is particularly relevant now during the anti-feminist backlash and return to commercially-sponsored glamour.

But it's too easy to be puritanical about this trend; glamour is back as an antidote to the distinctly unglamorous life most of us are forced to lead. Looking beyond the tits

id bums of *Top of the Pops* to the stage reveals a significant change in the numbers of bands where women form part of the line-up. The current hit parade has only seen one all-women band, the Irish singers, the Nolans, but a woman instrumentalist in a band is now commonplace. Abba still use all women for their glamour while Bucks Fizz (two men, two women) and Dollar (one man, one woman) use both sexes equally to create an asexual, cosy romantic theme.

Women are getting on with it in spite of their continued abuse — in record company ads and in the sexist content of a thousand songs. Certainly, there have always been

women musicians, persistent, tough, and even ambitious — but breaking through into the men's club which is the music biz requires that women musicians of today resist the pressures to conform and appeal as women, and, in order to transcend that, they must come up with the goods musically. It is difficult to shrug off three decades of well-sedimented pop music history which has given pleasure to both sexes, and formed part of women's collective consciousness.

But these histories must be challenged, subverted and even ignored in order for women to be freed from the unseen stranglehold of so many aspects of music. □

## SHAKESPEARE'S SISTERS

Cathy Itzin

The growth of the alternative theatre movement in the 70s, coinciding with the growth of the women's movement from its official beginnings in Britain in 1970, gave women an opportunity to work on an unprecedented scale in areas where doors were previously closed and often with a raised consciousness of women's exploitation and oppression within society. Today there are more women working in the theatre than ever before in its history. Not just in the traditional servicing (administrative) roles, or the ex-stereotyped sex-object (actress) roles, but as writers, designers, technicians and occasionally as artistic directors. This is a major achievement.

And yet, until the production of Lillian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine* in 1980, the National Theatre had not produced a single play by a woman either living or dead. Since then it has done three others including one commissioned for the Cottesloe (this was Owen Wymark's adaptation of the *One Woman Plays* by Franca Rame and Dario Fo); and a production of Michelene Wandor's *Aurora Leigh* originally produced by Mrs Worthington's Daughters. In its whole history the Royal Shakespeare Company has produced plays by three women: these were Pam Gems' *Piaf* (which transferred to the West End) and *Queen Christina* and Mary O'Malley's *Look Out: Here Comes Trouble* as well as two plays by Marguerite Duras. The National Theatre has, to date, used one woman director, though it had previously employed three women as apprentice directors producing smaller-scale productions. Until recently, the RSC had

employed three women directors — the influential Buzz Goodbody who founded The Other Place and who committed suicide in 1975, and subsequently Penny Cherns and Jane Howell, directing one show each since the theatre started. Currently, the RSC has two women attached to them as assistant directors. Women designers have fared better as they have throughout the theatre.

Figures from the major subsidised companies are not untypical of the patterns of employment of women in other areas of the theatre. Of the 42 shows running in the West End in one week in February, only 5 were written, and none directed, by women. On London's fringe, in that same week, of 47 shows, only 7 were written, and two directed, by women.

The truth is that women are still virtually invisible in positions of power. And even when they are involved in creating important work, it is ignored, insufficiently acknowledged, denied the attention and status it deserves, or it is devalued. While the conditions under which women's work is created are rarely given any consideration.

In 1929 Virginia Woolf imagined the fate of Shakespeare's sister, had he had one. As a young woman with the same talent and ambition, she would have had to 'mend stockings and mind the stew, not moon about with books'. Resisting the marriage arranged by her parents, she would have been beaten. Running away to London in pursuit of her art and craft, she would seek to act. But 'men laughed in her face', a manager 'bellowed something about poodles

dancing and women acting'. She could get no training and was unsafe on the streets alone at night. So . . . she got pregnant (by a 'nice' man), and then killed herself 'for who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet's heart when caught and tangled in a woman's body'?

Given the conditions of their lives, would it be possible for any woman to write the plays of Pinter or Osborne or Bond in the present day, any more than it was 'impossible for any woman to have written the plays of Shakespeare' then? The conditions under which women live and try to work today are only different in degree, and in certain areas not even all that much different. We are still oppressed.

Expectations of women, and women's expectations of themselves are low. Because of cultural conditioning and sex-role stereotyping, it is hard for most women to even conceive of themselves as artists, or to consider that a powerful and influential career in the theatre outside of acting might be possible. Many don't make the attempt; and some would question the value of doing so anyway within the male-created and male-dominated structures that exist. Buzz Goodbody is an archetype of the woman who did make the attempt, suffered the consequences and committed suicide. The odds were stacked against her simply on the grounds of her sex. Buzz Goodbody blamed herself when things went wrong, and felt that if she were successful, people would say, 'what a good director', but if a failure, 'the woman can't do it'.

It was pregnancy which finally paid to all aspirations Shakespeare's sister might have had to being an artist. And it is still

From the production of  
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# Channel Five

childbearing and rearing which are the greatest material constraints on women working today. All women either have children, have had children, will have children or have made the choice not to (and then manage their fertility or their sexual relationships in order not to). So all women are concerned, directly or indirectly, with child-raising, work done in isolation with little support emotionally or economically. Many women, of course, do the double shift of domestic and creative work, at great cost, the one unpaid the other badly paid. So 'mother-

hood' is a key factor determining whether women can work, when, and under what pressures. In the last analysis Virginia Woolf valued 'a room of her own' and an income of £500 a year more than the vote for women. There is now equal pay and sex discrimination legislation on the statute books. But how many women have their own spaces, or independence, or images of themselves as artists, as people with power?

Virginia Woolf and her writing are currently a symbol and source of inspiration for many women in the theatre, women for

whom suicide is not the collective solution but rather the celebration of 'women live'. Increasingly, in the arts and entertainment industries, women are taking charge — in performance, in the positions of power they do hold and from the platforms of conferences and publications, speaking out about their work and working conditions. We are asking for better, and better paid work, due recognition of work done and acknowledgement and provision for the raising of the next generation.

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## MOVIE ROLES

Mandy Rose

In the wake of a mass cinema-going audience, Hollywood has turned its attention to locating markets among more specific groups. In the mid to late 70s there was a financially sound bid to reach the market that had been created by women's liberation. Positive images are what we'd been demanding, and that supposedly is what we got, in the shape of *Julia*, *Girlfriends* and *Lice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*. Stories about the lives of 'liberated' women which somehow took the words out of our mouths by bringing a reformist notion of feminism into the market place of dominant cinema.

A few years later, a very different group of films was released in England. What they had in common was that they were marketed as fantasies of male violence and domination: *Dressed to Kill*, *He Knows You're Alone*, *The Shining*. Their arrival, concurrent with the media fascination with the Sutcliffe rapes and murders, was focussed on by various groups within the WLM and through pickets, demos, leafletting and attacks on cinemas, the political nature of violence against women was argued across a wide social spectrum.

These instances suggest the complexity of feminist engagement with the product of cinema — representations of women, sexuality and violence. A political practice for feminists in relation to film and TV has therefore involved taking on the whole gamut of patriarchal values involved in those industries. In the production process women's exclusion from employment, particularly in decision-making and technical grades, and in the product dominant forms of, for example, narrative, where individuals are portrayed against a backdrop of society rather than as agents in a constant process of change.

In Britain the situation in employment remains particularly bleak. Figures given at the 1982 ACTT Women's Conference reveal that out of 359 cameramen (*sic*) only 3 are women and out of 145 producer/directors only 10 are women. Women are still ghettoised into clerical and servicing areas of the industry, with a few interesting exceptions. Vision mixers for instance are predominantly women, for although with the

introduction of new technology the job increasingly demands technical expertise, the comparisons in operation between the typewriter and the vision mixer have meant opportunities for women to transfer from secretarial to vision mixer posts.

Pressure mainly from the Women's Film and Broadcasting Lobby, a group of women working in the industry, has had specific successes through lobbying. Before retiring as head of the IBA, Lady Plowden was taking considerable interest in women's employment in film and TV, questioning, for example, all applicants for franchises in 1981 on their intentions regarding employing women in technical grades. Their demand for equal representation for men and women in governing and administering Channel 4 also met with some success, though a fight still remains to pressurise Channel 4 to follow through their commitments to women's programme-making.

At the level of representation feminists have been active in all areas — in production, distribution, film criticism and teaching. In this country, feminist productions started with the London Women's Film Group, which was functioning in the early 70s, producing short, low-budget films and a feature, *Rapunzel*. The group had a commitment to challenging the predominant sexism of representations of women through investigating women's position in society and developing collective production as a way of spreading technical knowledge.

Through the 70s and into the 80s, feminist film-making has become an increasingly diverse work, though a continuing emphasis on collective practice and increasing numbers of productions crewed entirely by

women characterise the process. The independent sector continues to be a crucial site for feminist production. For while women programme-makers are gaining entry into the male bastions of the commercial companies, and making creative use of the albeit problematic slots available, for example Jenny Morgan's work in *Everyman* (*sic*), utilising the religious framework to investigate women's readings of Catholicism (*Sweet Mother*) and Islam (*Virtuous Women*), the bulk of feminist production work takes place outside the mainstream of the industry.

Working at film school, or with funding from Regional Arts Association or the British Film Institute, in permanent collectives like the Leeds Animation Workshop and Sheffield Women's Film Coop, or in *ad hoc* women's production groups, feminists have created the space to develop forms of cinema which, for example, break down the separation between fiction and documentary and the unmediated view of the world which the latter supposedly presents.

While the audience which independent films reach is undoubtedly small compared to the potential audience for a TV show, the establishment of Cinema of Women (COW) and Circles, who distribute work directed and generally crewed by women, has made many films, including those by early women directors such as Alice Guy (who was a prolific producer/director in Hollywood in the 20s) and *Maedchen in Uniform* (produced collectively in Germany in the 30s) available for screening and discussion.

The advent of Channel 4 certainly represents a potential for widening the audience for existing feminist work. Films from the COW and Circles catalogue will be appearing on our TV screens after November 1982, although thoughtful scheduling will be needed to replace the political and discussion contexts which many of these films were produced to be shown in. In terms of commissioned work, Channel 4 has stated its commitment to new representations and work by women. However, within a commissioning structure designed partly around interest groups (eg, youth/multi-cultural) and partly around product (eg, film/current affairs/light entertainment) the Channel has seen fit not to appoint a commissioning editor with specific responsibility to women. Many applications by feminists seem to be floundering between the inevitable 'old boy' network which underlies a commissioning structure, and accusations of lack of professionalism or technical skills so classically thrown at groups attempting to find radical ways of working. □



# Discussion

## Recipe for Defeat

Charles Clarke and David Griffith



Sam Aaronovitch, in 'Recipe for Defeat' (*Marxism Today*, April 1982), offers an analysis of the current situation of the Labour Left, and the weaknesses which may inhibit and even prevent future advances. As two Labour Left activists we find ourselves in substantial agreement with the broad distinctions which he makes between various left strategies, with the critique that he launches of the strategic perspectives which have tended to dominate the recent campaigns for party democracy and the Deputy Leadership, and with his advocacy of an alternative strategy which shifts the emphasis of Labour Left politics from internal leadership struggles to outward-looking mass political work.

This shift of emphasis is the main subject of a new Labour Coordinating Committee pamphlet, to which we are the principal contributors, *Labour and Mass Politics: Rethinking our Strategy*.<sup>1</sup> We believe that such a shift has rather more support, both explicit and implicit, within the ranks of the Labour Party than Aaronovitch implies, but needs more detailed elaboration than he was able to provide in his article. It is on these two aspects that we wish to concentrate attention.

Aaronovitch identified four competing 'strategic conceptions'. Of these the second and third, put briefly, argue for the establishment of a 'thorough-going socialist party' organised to 'pursue the socialist transformation of Britain', with winning the leadership battle as 'the crucial issue' and for the need to transform the Labour Party into a revolutionary vanguard party. These con-

ceptions share the view that a socialist programme would 'meet with a massive response from the voters' and that only media smokescreens are preventing an almost autonomous shift of mass opinion to a determinedly radical Labour Party. This view, we agree with Aaronovitch, is subject to the quite fundamental objection that it fails to grasp the reality of popular consciousness in Britain today. We would add that the reality of electoral defeat, most recently at Hillhead, is making this point more effectively than any rhetoric.

### Labour Right

Supporters of Aaronovitch's 'first strategic conception', those who argue for the *status quo* and regard even limited constitutional reforms as unwelcome, must, we agree, take the major responsibility for Labour's current weaknesses. However we do feel that the course of constitutional history cannot be reversed and that almost everyone now accepts the reality that an irreversible change has taken place.

But the Labour Right is in a good position at the moment to tap the vast reservoir of weariness with internal battles which undoubtedly exists amongst grass roots party activists, and to use this as a basis to win policy changes. In these circumstances, there is a danger in the assumption that the main policy matters on which the Left has won the votes in recent years are irrevocably settled. Rather, the first task of the Left is to consolidate these victories by taking a much more active and articulate lead in elaborating and campaigning in support of it. To

this end across broad areas of policy and party organisation where the Left is in effective control (for example on the NEC, which is recently unequivocally Left-dominated), needs to start to acting as the party and shake off the oppositional and factional habits of its own beleaguered past.

In his analysis of the 'fourth strategic conception', we believe Aaronovitch underestimates the growing recognition of the prolonged nature of the process of change which the Left has embarked. Advocacy of a return to mass politics is not, as Aaronovitch implies, confined to 'Peter Hain and others' — implicitly a small group of individuals with the Communist Party on the outside. While not in any way denying the continuing dominance of leadership-oriented politics, or devaluing the major contribution which Peter Hain has indeed made, we believe that too bleak a picture is painted. Several organised tendencies — Clause 4, Independent Labour Publications, the Chartists — have, from different starting points, arrived at a sceptical view of the traditional assumption on the Labour Left that socialist resolutions plus accountable leadership constitute a sufficient strategy for socialism. Perhaps more significantly, many Labour activists outside these small groups are looking for a more strategic approach to left advance and the Labour Coordinating Committee, though itself a quite broad alliance, is increasingly giving body and coherence to this range of opinion.

Thus current debates on the Labour Left are not simply, as Aaronovitch suggests, between Trotskyists and a disorganised 'broad left' — there is also a serious strategic debate within the 'broad left'. In this debate the Communist Party, on the outside, is unable to have more than a tangential impact and its electoral strategy limits its potential influence still further.

### Future tasks

Turning now to the tasks which Aaronovitch defines for the development of the 'mass politics' approach, we want to build on the points he makes and to add an extra one.

His first proposal is that the Left should 'develop its struggle for leadership within the party'. This idea needs to be carefully clarified. We believe that a new campaign for Leader or Deputy Leader would be a tactical disaster for the Left, pushing much of the party's centre ground towards the right and leaving the Left isolated. As we have argued earlier, 'leadership' needs to be defined much more in terms of policy and strategy, and less in terms of individual contests.

The second proposal is to extend co-operation between the Left in the party and the unions. We agree that it would be quite wrong to attempt to 'dismantle the transmission mechanism' between the party and the unions, but we do believe that the *organizational* relationship with the party's 'six million members' is often misconceived as a genuine *political* relationship, thus contributing to the over-optimistic view of popular consciousness discussed earlier. No better illustration could be sought than the union voting in the Deputy Leadership election. The priority must be for the party to develop a more active and campaigning relationship with the unions at all levels. The establishment of Labour Party workplace branches will be a major development here.

We regard Aaronovitch's third objective, the development by Labour of mass campaigning, as absolutely crucial. Many of the ingredients of this are fairly obvious, and occasionally some progress has been made in the mass demonstrations and weeks of action in the last two years. But the campaigning approach is still very far from being ingrained in the life of the party, particularly at the local level. This is the major theme of our pamphlet, and we elaborate fully there the need, identified by Aaronovitch to respect the autonomy of popular movements and

end 'Labour chauvinism' in campaigning activity.

#### The use of office

We would, however, add one major point to Aaronovitch's account. This is the way in which, both nationally and locally, the authority of electoral office can be used by the Labour Party. This is a distinctive contribution of the Labour Party, and there is more to be learnt from the failures of past Labour administrations than some iron law of 'betrayal'. That the exercise of government power is not as easy as is sometimes claimed is given greater point by the contemporary difficulties of the new French government, which some immediately lauded as the model for a future Left Labour government.

There are a number of initiatives which can be taken at the level of local government. First, at the level of pure propaganda, as for example the 'Save ILEA' campaign, the Sheffield fares campaign, or the 'nuclear-free zones' initiative, the local authority can become, as it needs to be, the popular expression of local opinion. But secondly, and more important, the Labour Party has to seek to change the ways in which its policies are implemented — to develop genuine democratic participation. Traditional state

paternalism has to be ended and more direct power and control given to the consumers of services, whether as tenants or parents through the wide variety of local community organisations. Alliances must in practice be built with sections of the community sometimes effectively excluded from real influence, most notably the ethnic minorities. These are changes which Labour can be implementing now, and are positive ways of building up the mass involvement which will be necessary if a Labour government is to be re-elected, let alone have the ability to implement left policies.

Similarly the Alternative Economic Strategy must concentrate far more upon the development of workplace organisation and regional and local initiatives, as a counterweight to the exercise of centralised government power.

These ideas for developing a 'mass politics' approach are confronting a long history of traditional organisation, sectarian dogma and outmoded practice. Aaronovitch is right to stress that the Left faces crucial problems. In our judgement the 'mass politics' approach, though beginning to gain support, must be taken much further if these problems are to be tackled successfully. □

<sup>1</sup> Available from LCC, 9 Poland Street, London W1.



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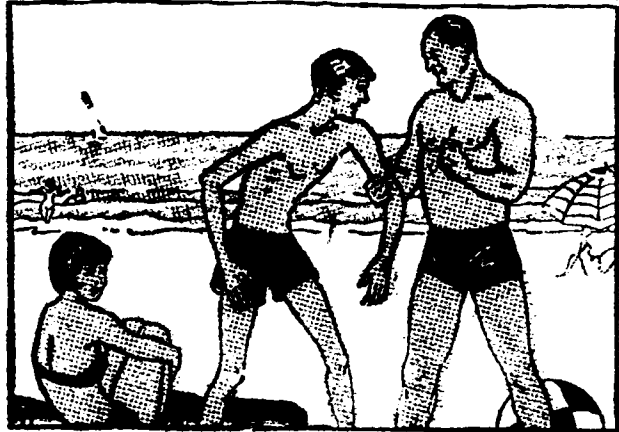
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# Reviews

## EVERY SECRET THING

Patricia Campbell Hearst with Alvin Moscow

Methuen 1982 hbk £8.95

ISBN 413 504 603

Shortly after the kidnap of Patty Hearst, on 4 February 1974, her captors issued a tape-recorded communique, partly spoken by Patty herself, and partly by one 'General Field Marshal Cinque', who declared that 'The Western Region Adult Unit' of the 'United Federation Forces of the Symbionese Liberation Army' had arrested the 19-year-old heiress as a prisoner of war.

For those who followed such things, the existence of the SLA was not news: already there had been communiqués issued, describing the SLA as 'a United and Federated grouping of members of different races and peoples and socialist political parties of the oppressed people of the Fascist and United States of America', or as 'a United Front and Federated coalition of members from the Asian, Black, Brown, Indian, White, Woman, Grey and Gay Liberation Movements'. Shortly after the SLA's first 'combat operation', the assassination of a black schools superintendant in Oakland, the SLA's 'Western Region Youth Unit' (as opposed presumably, to the 'adult' one), claimed responsibility, and when Patty Hearst herself announced that she had voluntarily joined the SLA's forces, it was to the 'information-intelligence unit' that she was attached. And, a few weeks later, when

six SLA members perished in a bloody shoot-out with the Los Angeles police, it was announced that 'the Malcolm X Combat Unit of the Symbionese Liberation Army proudly takes up the banner of the New World Liberation Front'.

It was, of course, all nonsense. The Malcolm X Combat Unit by that stage consisted of two people, plus Patty Hearst herself. The SLA, *in toto*, at its highest point of active membership comprised one black man, two white men, and five white women. This was the Federated Front and all its units; the Youth Unit matured into the adult Unit in less than two months. Patricia Hearst's book about her experiences (written 'with Alvin Moscow') is not very illuminating on the key question of whether her participation in the SLA's activities (including two armed robberies) was genuinely voluntary: she states that, having been kept blindfold and physically abused, in a darkened closet for 57 days, she was offered the choice of walking out free or joining the 'army', and, not believing the first offer to be genuine, took up the second for her own preservation. What is highly interesting is the picture which she and her ghost writer paint of the SLA itself: the personal and moral squalor of its relationships, the unbelievable grandiosity of its aspirations (and the poverty of its real ideas), the obsession with weaponry, and the 'symbiotic' dependence of both the men and the women on a rigidly patriarchal hierarchy of 'command'.

It would be possible, of course, to shrug off the activities of the Symbionese Liberation Army, particularly as seen through the eyes of the heiress to a vast newspaper fortune. The revolutionary Left has always picked up its fair share of fantasists and psychopaths, and to see the SLA as bearing relevance to the American New Left in general would be as unfair as judging all black African states by the regime of Idi Amin.

But in fact the SLA were not alone, and if their activities were farcical, then they echoed (in the manner of the old saw) the tragedy of the American New Left as a whole. In early 1968, Students for a Democratic Society, the organisational focus of much of the anti-imperialist movement, had been strong and united enough to force the effective resignation of President Lyndon Johnson. Eighteen months later, SDS lay in pieces, splintered and shattered by a factional in-fight that led to the emergence, on the one hand, of an 'old left', workerist, Maoist sect; and, on the other, of a small, underground urban guerrilla force called Weatherman.

And the point about Weatherman (or 'Weather Underground' as it later renamed itself, in response to charges of sexism) was that its members had not been peripheral marginal to the mass movement: they were among the best and the brightest of the who had led the Civil Rights movement and the campaign against the Vietnam War. Although their political writings were, in terms of the sophistication of their language, obviously way above the grandiose meditations of the SLA, the two groups shared the belief that the racial minorities of the United States could, if necessary by themselves, undertake a successful revolution against four-fifths of the American population (including a stupified and bought-off white working class) and that the way to herald this revolution was to indulge in individual acts of terror, the nastier the better. Leading Weatherperson Bernadine Doherty, for example, responded to the Charles Manson murders by commenting: 'Dig it, first they killed those pigs, then they ate dinner the same room as them, then they even shoved a fork into a victim's stomach. Wild! And, as Nigel Young pointed out in his book *An Infantile Disorder?*, the Weather Underground, like the SLA four years later, 'created an irrational caricature of the relationships in the larger society; insensitive to the needs of individuals, riven by aggressive rivalry, dominated by hierarchy that used threats and coercion to maintain themselves'.

How could it have gone so desperately wrong? SDS had emerged to national attention, in the early 60s, with a manifesto (the Port Huron statement) which anticipated many of the concerns of the early 80s: rejecting the rigidity of the centralised, vanguard party, and the determinism of the economic base, it posited a politics which started from the personal, and which emphasised the vital importance of culture (particularly, the sterility of the mass consumption society) in stunting the real potentialities of the mass of the people. Further, the New Left did not share the old Left's hostility towards the individual, moral impulse in politics: it believed firmly that the outcome of the revolution was present in the means of its making. Perhaps such an open, innocent statement could only have been made in America, where the McCarthy witch-hunt had effectively wiped the left slate clean and left a generation for whom everything was fresh and yet-to-be-discovered. Certainly, the generosity and libertarianism of Port Huron allowed SDS to play an active and leading role in both the Civil Rights and anti-war movements; it allowed radicals an



revolutionaries sufficient space to take on and the concerns and life-style of the growing youth counter-culture.

But, ultimately, the New Left was not new enough. Its opponents joked that what was it about it wasn't new, and what was new about it wasn't left, and while the latter statement was fallacious, the former was at least half true. Woven into the fabric, invisible within the brightness of its coat of many colours, older strands remained. And when the full force of the state was hammered down on to the heads of the anti-war and black liberation movements — particularly after Richard Nixon's election — the old organisational imperatives of Leninism combined with the New Left's own hidden determinism and elitism to create a network of tiny, conspiratorial vanguards, of a tightness and zeal that might have frightened the Bolsheviks themselves.

For, if the concept that all human activity flows smoothly from relations at the economic base was determinist, how much more so was the idea that the entire white working class had been bought off, sucked in and swallowed up by corporate control of the means of consumption? If the old Left was elitist in believing that it alone could penetrate the con-trick of capitalism, and lead the masses to self-consciousness, how much more elitist had a revolutionary to be, when that con-trick had not only militarised the labour process and corrupted the polity, but had also polluted the most intimate areas of social and personal life? And when, moreover, the particular masses to be mobilised were either economically and geographically disparate, or, even more crucially, *in the minority*?

In other words, the application of materialist models of ideology and organisation to a politics based in personal life led the New Left in the late 60s into a maze of political contradictions, and some philosophical ones as well. If RD Laing and other existentialist psychiatrists had trouble in defining the nature of the 'true', individual personality before it had been corrupted and twisted by the family, then the New Left had even greater problems in locating the 'real' collective personality, underneath all the grime and dirt of the consumer spectacle. 'False consciousness' was an altogether too feeble description of the condition of the masses in the age of the electric toothbrush and the vaginal deodorant; only the most rigorous shock-tactics, the most extreme psychic destruction and reassembly, could unlock the 'true' but hidden revolutionary impulse underneath.

Again, directly to relate the transforma-

tion of Patty Hearst — locked in a closet, bombarded with noise, denied all outside contact, sexually abused — with the political re-creation of the Weather Underground would be a gross and unfair analogy. But her description (confirmed by others) of the daily life of the rest of the SLA — the constant harangues from the 'leader', the refusal of any modicum of privacy, the perpetual 'military training', the corrosive fury of all personal relations — does compare with what went on in the closed Weather-communities in the summer of 1969, as the ex-student radicals attempted to purge the white pig within themselves, in order to emerge as pure and gleaming tools of the revolution; a honing down that was — and could only — be effected by the constant, collective use of the very moral strength, and sense of individual anger at injustice, that had brought them into a new kind of politics all those years before.

The way that the spirit of the early New Left mutated into a crazy world of fantasy and terror — with, it should be said, all possible help from the repressive forces of the state itself — is a cautionary tale. It is not an argument against libertarianism, as such, but it does undermine the idea that the laws which apply to traditional revolutionary organisations somehow cease to operate when the agency of change is no longer confined to the industrial working class. Before her ordeal, Patty Hearst was a mild radical, typical of her generation. Now she describes herself as a conservative (and an anti-feminist conservative to boot). Both her class origins and her terrible experiences make her totally exceptional. But how many of the millions of Vietnam-generation Americans who voted for Ronald Reagan had, after an initial enthusiasm for radical or even revolu-

tionary politics, been excluded and finally repelled by what the New Left eventually became?

When the SLA — or, strictly speaking, its information-intelligence unit — first removed their captive's blindfold, a strange little conversation took place. Seeing only eight people, Patty Hearst asked, not unreasonably, where all the other units were. The General Field-Marshal burst out laughing. 'What other units?', he asked her. 'This is all there is, baby. We're the whole army. You're looking at it.' The sad truth is that, in all probability, that's just the way they wanted it to be.

David Edgar

## SEX, POLITICS AND SOCIETY: THE REGULATIONS OF SEXUALITY SINCE 1880

Jeffrey Weeks

Longmans 1981.

ISBN 0 582 48333 6 Hdbk £11.00

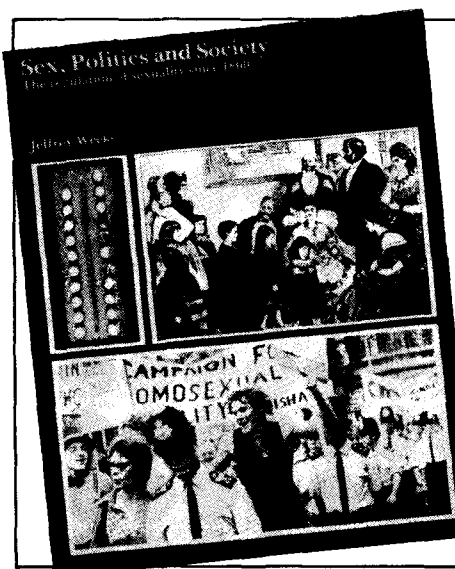
ISBN 0 582 48334 4 Pbk £5.95

Jeffrey Weeks, in attempting to chart changes in sexual behaviour and the habits, customs, laws and taboos surrounding it, has taken on a major task. His subtitle, 'the regulation of sexuality', signals that any discussion is bound to try to define not only what sexuality 'is' — a difficult and in a sense, Weeks argues, an inappropriate goal — but also to give an account of how society structures sexuality and sexual behaviour.

Jeffrey Weeks opens with a theoretical chapter, in which he sets out the premises on which his historical approach is based. The writing of a history of sexuality, he argues, is difficult because (Weeks, 1981:1):

'The usual assumption is that sex is a definable and universal experience, like the desire for food . . . I want to suggest that it is the centrality given to this concept of sexuality that constitutes a problem for historians, for it ignores the great variety of patterns that history reveals, and the very different meanings given to what we blithely label as "sexual activity".'

He is concerned to move away from such a notion of sex as a universal and trans-historical experience essentially impervious to social and cultural change. He is also concerned to reject the idea that there can be any 'totalising' theory that would relate sexual behaviour in an uncomplicated way to an economic infrastructure. To that extent this work represents a (latent) critique of the Marxism of the early 1970s. At that time both Gay Liberation and the women's movement in Britain sought for explanations of sexual regulation and the oppression of gays and women in terms of the dominance of



capitalism, and sought to relate forms of sexual subordination unproblematically to it. This volume stresses rather the diversity and complexity of both sexual behaviour and its regulation; and Jeffrey Weeks perceives the latter as the coincidence of diverse influences and pressures interacting in a variety of ways that can never be reduced either to class or gender.

In pursuing this approach Jeffrey Weeks has been much influenced by Michel Foucault — and has also contributed to a popularisation of the French theorist's thought. He mounts a brief and lucid critique of Foucault's latent functionalism (Weeks, 1981:9):

'On the most general level Foucault's society of normalisation is in danger of being as rigidly functional, tending towards a necessary social equilibrium, as Talcott Parsons "... social control seems to be absolute".'

Yet ultimately his attempt is to use a Foucauldian approach in a more historicised way, which recognises that the discourses shaping sexuality 'have their conditions of existence and their effects in concrete, historical, social, economic and ideological situations.' And, for him, Foucault's greatest importance is in raising the 'fundamental question' of how (Weeks, 1981:6)

'in our society sex is seen not just as a means of biological reproduction or a source of harmless pleasure, but, on the contrary, has come to be seen as the central part of our being, the privileged site in which the truth of ourselves is to be found.'

Having set out his theoretical perspective, Jeffrey Weeks presents a detailed account of the major aspects of sexuality and sexual behaviour and discourse in Britain since the Industrial Revolution. Chapter after chapter is densely packed not only with information but also with clear, concise summaries of ideological, scientific and other debates (for example eugenicism; the Freud/Jones Horney dispute; the disagreements between

Freud and Havelock Ellis); there are brief outlines of the careers of prominent sex reformers and pioneers, and summaries of theoretical positions. So, while clearly written, it is not a quick read, but it is both scholarly and lucid. Indeed, so full of information is it that it must be indispensable to any student of the period and of sexual custom and practice in general.

Is it a political book? As a feminist and a Marxist, such a question must be the ultimate touchstone to this reviewer at least. *Sex, Politics and Society* represents a particular theoretical approach with covert political implications. Weeks's emphasis on the complexity and pluralism of ideologies and social practices is a reaction against 'monolithic' Marxism. This sometimes appeared to deny the authenticity of subjectivity by tending to describe for example oppressed groups who did not recognise their oppression (such as working class Tories, or women who 'want' men to be dominant) as victims of 'false consciousness'. This has come to be seen as elitist and patronising and recent work in many areas has tended rather to emphasize the contradictory aspects of 'reactionary' ideologies and ideological practices. Such an approach is more democratic than that of the vanguard militant who in one grandiose movement claimed to tear the scales from the eyes of the oppressed and exploited victim.

Now, though, the pendulum has swung so far that we are in danger of returning to an atomisation of experience in which no one explanation has any theoretical supremacy, and thus in danger of falling back into a sociological pluralism which ultimately involves the denial of real conflicts and struggles in society, and the real coercion involved in the domination that exists. In this scheme of things, morality has no anchor in material life, but becomes simply a form of idealism, an expression of goodwill, and logically at least, it would become diffi-

cult for women to raise any sort of *absolute* objection to any form of male behaviour we would once more become reliant on liberal definitions of what constitutes morality

After finishing this book I was left wondering how different as supposedly 'left' social history this is from traditional social history with its feelings of 'one damn thing after another' and ultimately little sense of causal primacy simply because there are so many intersecting explanations. The end of the book celebrates the breakdown of sexual categories (at least for gay men) during the 1970s, and an optimistic looking forward to a time when sex-gender categories are not so defining as they have been. Yet to a woman when women are still so deeply defined — psychologically, economically, legally, emotionally — by virtue of their sex, this must seem like a movement away from the political meaning of sexual definitions in our society — and also a move away from an attempt at political initiatives or solutions to the problems the regulation of sexuality has hitherto raised.

*Sex, Politics and Society* is fascinating in its detail and subtle in its approach. We still need a book that would explain why sex and gender are of central political importance to all socialists.

Elizabeth Wilso

## THE LONG MARCH OF THE FRENCH LEFT

R W Johnson

Macmillan 1981 pbk £8.95  
ISBN 0 333 274 180

To predict the results of future elections is always very hazardous. R W Johnson is certainly too cautious to take such a risk. Nevertheless his analysis of the rise of the French Left from 1968 till its defeat in the parliamentary elections of 1978 clearly leaves us with the impression that a Left victory in the 1981 presidential elections would be ver-

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likely.

The victory of Francois Mitterrand in May 1981 came of course as a surprise to most everybody and it would not be fair to criticise Johnson — whose book was finished in 1979 — for not having foreseen it. Indeed it was only in December 1980 after some unexpected results in by-elections that the rigidity of Giscard's electorate was revealed and began to cast doubt on his re-election. It was even in those conditions very few people believed that Mitterrand would be able to succeed. Only at the very last moment did such a possibility become plausible.

*The Long March of the French Left* should not therefore be judged on its failure to announce the 1981 victory. The real question is the extent to which the book helps us understand how such a victory has been possible. And that is exactly where we must admit that it is of very little use.

To be sure it provides a very readable — if superficial — account of political life in France since the Second World War. People concerned with the transformation of the old PCF into the new Socialist Party (PS) or with the history of the 'Union of the Left' will no doubt find much useful information. Where the main weakness of the book lies is in its attempt to put the changes in electoral politics into a wider analytical framework. Johnson declares in the preface his intention to link them with the changing social structure of contemporary France. But for him the two most important phenomena in that area are the erosion of religious cleavage and the postwar baby-boom: both have provided new recruits for the Left. But concerning the characteristics of capitalist development in postwar France nothing is said at all, a fatal omission, since it is there that we find the key to the rise of the Left and its 1981 victory.

Gaullism was much more than an inter-class coalition behind the figure of a charismatic leader, as Johnson would have it. The decade following the accession to power of General de Gaulle in 1958 saw a radical modernisation of French society under the hegemony of monopoly capital. The traditional sectors remained in the alliance — and were neutralised — thanks to the nationalist and populist character of Gaullist ideology. But there is no doubt that the economic and social policies of the regime favoured the interests of big capital.

That modernisation profoundly transformed the social structure — in 1954, 6.7% of the population was still engaged in agriculture while in 1976 it had fallen to 0.8% — and led to a strong expansion of the new middle classes'. Those social and economic changes are absolutely crucial in



order to understand the political developments since the 60s. Johnson's failure to account for that new phase of capitalist development incapacitates him in providing a rationale for such events as 1968, the growth of the PS, the crisis of the Right and finally the Left victory. Take 1968, for instance. It was first a revolt of those new middle classes, a product of Gaullist economic policies, but antagonised by the authoritarian and conservative character of the regime. At the same time it was a revolt of the working class, an expression of a revitalisation of the trade union movement linked to the transformations in the labour process brought about by Gaullist modernisation. The decline of Gaullism which followed those events — despite the electoral triumph of the General in 1968 — was therefore not, as Johnson argues, a consequence of the great man. Paradoxically it was a consequence of its very success: Gaullism had so deeply transformed French society that the very conditions for its maintenance had disappeared. The rise of the PS since the Epinay Congress in 1971 — where Mitterrand was elected first secretary — cannot be understood outside the context of the new social structure and the new contradictions that emerged in France in the 60s. The PS was able to articulate many of the demands of those sectors — contrary to the Communist Party which made the same attempt but without success during its brief 'eurocommunist' phase — and that explains its rapid growth, not the crisis of the Gaullist alliance.

From the point of view of the Right, it soon became evident that the old coalition

could not be maintained. The economic crisis rendered a continuation of the protective measures, favouring the petty bourgeoisie and small capital and which had allowed its survival, impossible. Chirac's resignation as Prime Minister in 1976, indicated the open split between the two factions of the 'Majority'. From then on, Giscard and his new Prime Minister, Raymond Barre, would force through an economic 'recovery' programme clearly favouring the most advanced sectors of capital. Trying to use the crisis to impose a restructuring of the economy, the government liberated prices and imposed deflationary measures with a view to restoring monetary stability and international competitiveness. The opposition of the 'national' sector of capital — represented by Chirac's *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR) — to those policies was such that it eventually led to the Right's eviction from power in 1981.

On all those deeply conflicting interests, Johnson is absolutely silent. He is therefore unable to present an adequate panorama of the different forces in French politics. Blind to the profound contradictions among the Right — going much further than simple conflicts of ambitions and personalities — he, on the other hand, overestimates the divisions among the Left. Principally, he cannot recognise the profound impact that almost two decades of Left unity has had and the profound need for change manifested by the French people. Because if Mitterrand won, it is not only thanks to a third of Chirac's supporters who decided to vote for him or to abstain. It is also because 25% of the communist voters — who could not accept the sectarian attitude of the PCF — opted for Mitterrand instead of Marchais in the primary. Faced with such a disavowal of its anti-socialist campaign, there was no other solution for the party than rallying behind Mitterrand in the run-off.

The unity of the Left was finally restored *in extremis* and gave it the victory. However it was only an 'electoral' unity and it is far from providing the best conditions for a socialist transformation. The alliance between the new middle classes and the working class needs now to be constructed through concrete policies and common objectives. The demands of youth and of women — the support of both groups has been vital to the victory — must also be articulated to form a national-popular collective will. To transform an electoral coalition into a new hegemonic bloc will not be an easy task. But the success or failure of the socialist experiment in France depends on its realisation.

**Chantal Mouffe**

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# LETTERS

## THE LABOUR PARTY

First, congratulations on instituting a letters section — pity it's been such a long time coming.

Sam Aaronovitch reveals (*MT*, April), in what must be one of the great ironies of history, the spectre now haunting the Left of the Labour Party, its destruction by the ultra-Left and its subsequent marginalisation in British politics.

In response he calls for 'a coherent strategic perspective which can defeat not only the perspective of the Right but also that of the Militant and other Trotskyist groupings'. I said it to him that even if such a perspective existed it would take a lot longer than the intervening time between now and the next election to diffuse such a view (in the absence of any socialist mass media) within the Labour Party and a substantial proportion of the electorate.

Unpalatable though it is, is there really any alternative in the present drastic situation but to make concessions to the Right in the Labour Party? — and thus cut the ground from under the feet of the SDP/Liberal Alliance.

The alternative may well be the domination of British politics for a generation by a social democratic alliance à la Sweden — in which case there would be no 'centre of gravity to shift to the left'.

*Simon Partridge London*

## V TIMES

Given the present political situation, which *Marxism Today* should be as concerned with as any other Communist Party publication, would it not have been more appropriate to have published an article by a member of the Salvador Communist Party rather than an interview with the Chief Constable of Cornwall? The front cover gave me the impression that I was buying a copy of the *V Times*.

*G. Baker London*

## FASHION AND THE LEFT

I was surprised and pleased to see a short article on fashion in last month's *Marxism Today*. I cannot think of anywhere on the Left where fashion is considered worthy of discussion — for this reason alone I feel it was a good thing.

However, I couldn't help feeling that the author was only addressing herself to a small minority of sophisticated feminists and a number of serious weaknesses seem immediately apparent. Surely there is still a mass market in clothes which doesn't come only 'from the streets' and surely there are many women (including feminists) who are not so defiant and happy about the dictum that dressing to please yourself is so easy and pleasurable. There are also some men (probably a much smaller number) who actually take an interest in their clothes but there are, no doubt, many more who would like to, but who do fear being 'laughed at'. To claim that this shows an unwillingness to change is, I believe emotive and simplistic.

I still feel it was good to have the piece — but let's have more discussion — perhaps even an article.

*Pauline West Birmingham*

## THE DARWIN DEBATE

According to Robert Young, we should not unreservedly oppose the fundamentalist obscurantists who deny the facts of biological evolution, because some evolutionists hold extremely reactionary views which they justify by distorted conclusions drawn from Darwin's ideas on natural selection. As a non-scientist I should like to express a point of view.

No reputable biologist or palaeontologist, rejects the ideas of evolution and there doesn't appear to be any material alternative to the principle of natural selection. Any alternative to selection must rely on some idealist conception like Bernard Shaw's 'life force'. Neo-Lamarckian ideas such as those put forward a few decades ago in the Soviet Union have no contemporary support.

Non-materialist theories are by their very nature easier to use for the purpose of justifying reactionary political ideas than materialist ones. Materialist theories may be misused by those pursuing reactionary social and political goals, but they can at least be countered by scientific argument.

It seems to me that it is just as valid to deduce from a natural selection theory that humankind has evolved and survived because of the highly developed forms of co-operation within the species and because of the greater care over a longer period expended on the young, as it is to accept ideas such as that of the late Sir Arthur Keith who once declared that war was nature's pruning knife, or Eysenck's ideas which help to feed racial and social elitism.

There may be times when humanists and

Marxists may find themselves with some allies with whom they disagree philosophically and politically. Surely, however, those who call themselves scientific socialists could not think twice when it comes to publicly ranging themselves with other Darwinists against the 'born again' fundamentalists of the 'moral majority' whether it be in the Bible belt of the USA or anywhere else. Surely this is a battle on which there can be no compromise.

*N. G. N. Kelsey London*

## THE DARWIN DEBATE

Robert M. Young, in his otherwise excellent and timely article in the April '82 issue 'The Darwin Debate' gives three impressions which need some clarification.

Firstly, although Darwin was a 'theist' during mid-career in later life he became a materialist agnostic. This can be seen in his private 'M' notebook and in his letter to Edward Aveling of 13 October 1880, which was originally thought to have been to Marx. Darwin's reticence on the subject of religion was motivated by not wanting to upset his family.

Secondly, Marx and Engels were fully consistent in their support of Darwinism. The apparent disparity that Mr Young alludes to is merely the result of their appreciation of Darwinism as central to a materialist world-view.

Thirdly, I can only imagine that the suggestion that it would be a mistake to side with the establishment scientists fighting Creationism is due to a tragic misprint. Stephen Gould the scientist cited is an anti-racist, feminist, vocal critic of Sociobiology and other form of reactionary internalism, and is part originator of an interpretation of the fossil record which has shattered the establishment (gradualist) view of evolution, supports work in palaeontology done in the USSR since the war, and can accurately be described as dialectical. To suggest that we should join forces with Reaganite, misogynistic, homophobic, fundamentalists against a sincere radical scientist of great integrity, for no stated good reason, is unforgiveable stupidity. To attack scientists purely because they sell their labour to the establishment of bourgeois society is extremely short-sighted. It is also not guaranteed to ensure a good wheat-crop as Lysenko and his mates found out.

*Alan Lewis London*

**We welcome your letters for the June issue. They should be no longer than 250 words and arrive at the office by Friday, May 7th.**

# NOTES

## COMMUNIST FEMINISTS

*Sally Davison writes:* Recently feminists in the Communist Party met for a national conference in Birmingham. We all felt this was timely: there is currently a backlash against feminism, in the world at large and on the Left.

Feminists need to launch a new offensive, so that feminist politics influence all areas of politics — we don't want to be an undigested lump in the Left, the 'women and (any demand from the shopping list) syndrome'. This offensive is not simply negative. Feminist politics have made an important contribution to the Left in the last ten years. We want to carry on making this contribution. In particular, all felt that the alternative economic strategy needs radical revision, taking people's working lives as its starting point.

As far as the Communist Party was concerned, we put forward various proposals geared towards educating both the membership and the Executive Committee about feminism, and called for greater priority to be given to *Link*, the CP women's journal (available from St John St.). *Marxism Today* also needs much greater participation by women. We are working on this, but would appreciate suggestions from women to help us.

## RADICAL NURSES

*Jane McNamara writes:* The Radical Nurses Group is holding its next National Conference in Sheffield at the Park Health Centre, Duke Street (at the corner of Rhodes Street), Sheffield 2, from Saturday 15 May to Sunday 16 May. The main discussion will be on Nursing Training. All nurses are welcome. More details from 218 Heavyside Rd, Sheffield 10.

## LEYLAND VEHICLES: THE WORKERS' ALTERNATIVE

*Mick Paddon writes:* The Leyland Vehicles

Joint Works Committee and the Manchester Engineering Group have just published a report which formed the basis for the union alternatives to the management's proposals for redundancies and further cuts, which generated the recent four weeks strike. Although the strike has ended, largely because of the extreme threats of total closure by the management, the Joint Works Committee still intends to oppose the Leyland Vehicles Corporate Plan and to fight for the alternatives. In the light of our experiences we intend to produce a number of articles relating to various aspects of the fight against redundancies and the alternative plans, since we believe that there are important issues for the whole of the labour movement which require public discussion.

The report covers the history of mismanagement at Leyland, the crisis in the international truck industry, Tory economic policies and Leyland Vehicles and the trade union alternatives. It costs £1.25 including post and packing and is available from: Manchester Engineering Group, Salford Central Mission, The Broadway, Salford 5.

## MARXISM TODAY IN HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

*Doris Deering writes:* Inspired by recent issues of *Marxism Today*, the Hemel Hempstead branch of the Communist Party has organised a series of six lecture/discussion evenings this spring, held at fortnightly intervals around themes contained in the journal.

Our aims have been twofold: to make the series a focus for discussion on short and long-term strategies for local Communist Party members and others on the Left, and to generate interest in *Marxism Today*. Lectures have been of the highest quality, and the discussion positive and constructive. Attendances have been quite good, with about two dozen people on each occasion, comprising both local Communists and

people known personally by members, a other local activists.

I have no doubt that these lectures and discussions are producing greater clarity our political work. Many on the Left v agree with the importance which both De Priscott and Robin Blackburn have attach to the raising of a socialist political consciousness within the labour movement would suggest to other branches that th could do no better in *initiating* this proci than to organise a similar series of lectures their locality.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**John Wakefield** is a journalist with ins knowledge of *The Times*.

**Harold Wolpe** teaches at Essex University **Peter Vincent-Jones** is at the Centre Criminological and Socio-Legal Studi Sheffield University.

**Keith Dixon** works at Grenoble Univers and is a member of the PCF.

**Daniel Perraud** is a research worker Grenoble University and a member of PCF.

**Michael Pentz** is Vice Chairperson of CNL

**Bob Rowthorn** is author of *Capitalis Conflict and Inflation* and a member of Marxism Today Editorial Board.

**Frankie Rickford** is a *Morning Star* reporter **Sheila Hancock** is an actress.

**Sue Beardon** is a teacher.

**Cathy Itzin** is the author of *Alone*, a pl written jointly with Ann Mitchell.

**Mandy Rose** is a film technician w 4-Corner Films.

**Sue Steward** is a freelance writer and editor of *Collusion* magazine.

**David Edgar** is a playwright.

**Elizabeth Wilson** is the author of *Mir Writing*.

**Chantal Mouffe** teaches at City Universi London.

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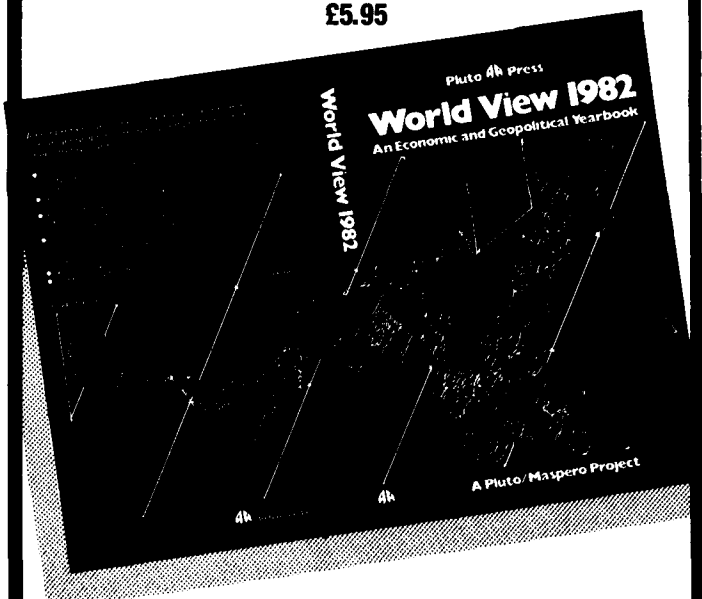
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